

HISTORICAL PAPERS

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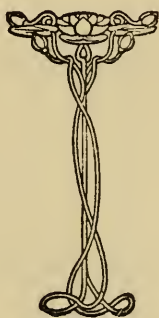
SERIES XII

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

1916

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PREFATORY NOTE

The authors of two papers here published, Mr. Turner and Mr. Harrell, are students in Trinity College. For valuable criticisms of their work acknowledgment is due Mr. R. D. W. Connor and Mr. Marshall Haywood, of Raleigh. The sketch map on p. 56 was kindly furnished by Mr. W. F. Eason, Surveyor of Gates County.

WM. K. BOYD,
For Committee on Publication.

Nov. 22, 1916.

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HISTORICAL PAPERS

SERIES XII

SLAVERY IN EDGECOMBE COUNTY *

BY JAMES K. TURNER

ORIGIN AND NUMBERS

Slavery existed in Edgecombe County from its earliest days. Before the grant of the Carolina charter to the Lords Proprietors, settlers came from Virginia into the Albemarle section, and it is reasonable to believe that the first African slaves were brought in by them at their migration. African slaves, however, were not the only type of slavery in Edgecombe. There were Indian slaves, who had become so on account of crime, or of sale by some of their own race as captives taken in war. The colonial records tell that captive Indians were carried up Tar River and worked in the turpentine industry.¹

There was yet a third class of bondsmen, the unfortunate class of whites who had been indentured in England, and sent by their masters to the colony. Many such servants were also apprenticed by the courts of the province or had been kidnapped in England, brought over and sold, or according to an act of Parliament, had been transported to the colony and sold for crime, for a term of years, to the highest bidder. It is practically impossible to ascertain the exact date when this sort of servitude came to Edgecombe, but there are several examples of its existence. When the Reverend George Whitfield made his tour of eastern North Carolina in 1765, visiting Edgecombe County, he had with him a white servant. The Colonial Records inform us that St. Mary's Parish, Edgecombe, had several of these servants to support, because of infirmities and old age. The law regarding indentured servants provided for release of such servants having a good behavior

* Edgecombe is one of the large counties of eastern North Carolina. It was chartered in 1741. This study of Slavery in Edgecombe was awarded the Southern History Prize in June, 1916.—Wm. K. Boyd.

slaves and a few whites, the ratio of the increase being two to one in favor of the negroes.

There was some dispute as to the accuracy of this census, since Governor Dobbs pronounced it defective. The people, he said, were holding back their taxables or negroes. The error could not have been great, for when a year later he himself ordered a more correct return of the total number of negro taxables, they were the same as in 1754.

Still another census was made in the same way in 1756, when 1,091 negro taxables and 1764 whites were reported, showing an increase of about 167 negroes and 514 whites over the preceding year. It must have been that the increase of the negroes was from births, since Dobbs in 1761 said that but few people had come in bringing slaves since the French and Indian wars. This sudden change and growth of the white population may be attributed to a heavy immigration of white families who came to settle in the fertile bottoms of Fishing and Swift creeks. Elisha Battle, with several more prominent men, came to Edgecombe between 1740 and 1760 and bought 1,212 acres of land from Mr. Sanders and settled with his family.

Another census made in 1766 gives the number of both white and black taxables as 2,066; there being no distinction between white and black we are without means of ascertaining the exact number of negroes in that year. It is to be noted, however, that there was a considerable decline of population compared with that of previous years.¹³ In 1767 both slaves and whites had decreased in number. There were 1060 slaves and 1,200 white taxables, making a decrease of twenty-nine slaves and over 330 whites. This was due to the fact that in 1757, a year after the census in 1756 was taken, Halifax County was formed as independent county from Edgecombe. This county, as can be seen from the maps, included several slave-holders in the bottoms of Fishing Creek. There must have been a heavy increase of slaves, considering the population Halifax took from Edgecombe when the two counties were divided.

In 1790 we have a notable increase of slaves and a small increase of whites. There were in the county 1260 heads of families. Of these only 481 owned slaves, and only 27 families

owned twenty or more slaves. Four men owned a considerable number: Edward Hall 86, Absolom Benton 40, Lewis Ervin 36, and Josiah Ford 86. Seventy-five families owned less than 20 and over 10, and a hundred families owned less than 10 and over 2. Ninety-nine owned 2, while 79 families owned only one slave. The entire white population is here reported for the first time. There were 3,152 slaves and 6,933 whites, an increase of 2,092 slaves over the year 1767. Since we have no account of the entire white population prior to this census, no definite comparison of the increase can be given, but it will be a safe estimate to say it was of a ratio of three to one. It was during this great increase also that Nash County was formed from Edgecombe in 1777, taking with it a liberal portion of population.

In 1800 there was a decrease of 417 whites from the previous census of 1790, and an increase of 753 slaves. It is to be noted that the year 1800 indicates the general trend that made Edgecombe a slave county, and finally marked her as being one of the great black counties of the South. Never again does the census bring the total population of whites up to the number of blacks. There never were many free negroes in the county. The census of 1800 gives the first returns of free negroes, 106; in 1860, the last census, there were only 389.

By 1830 the white and black population was almost equal, the negroes having a slight majority. In 1840 a sudden leap, as if some mighty forces had shot servitude to the forefront, ran the number of slaves to 15,708, or over twice the number of whites. There is only one solution for this great increase—cotton had a sudden boom when the new invention, the cotton gin, came to be used in the early years of the nineteenth century. It is nothing but right to say that in the early days of the county many earnest men looked upon slavery as an evil that would in time disappear; but with the invention of the cotton gin, Edgecombe as nature so placed her, became a great center for cotton growing. It was then discovered by her people that slavery was a "natural institution," and the only relation that could exist between the whites and the blacks, and together with the entire South, Edgecombe began to force the

political parties to assume a positive and uncompromising defense of these propositions.

In 1850 the tide slightly changed, and number of slaves declined, because men of Edgecombe had begun to go southwest in search of new lands, carrying their slaves with them. It is noticeable that the largest number of sales of slaves in Tarboro were made between 1845 and 1850, which indicates a tendency to purchase negroes for western farming.

The last census before the liberation of the slaves, that of 1860, shows that there were 10,108 negroes in bondage and 389 free negroes, and a population of 6,789 whites. Slaves had increased nearly 2,000 in number and the whites had decreased nearly 1,500 in number since 1840.

These are the official returns, and therefore constitute our only means of knowing with any degree of certainty how many negroes there were in the county. Unsatisfactory as they may be, they nevertheless indicate a tendency which is not wholly uninformative—namely a system which brought Edgecombe ultimately into a slave and, then immediately after the Civil War, a negro regime.

LAW OF SLAVERY

The law concerning slavery in Edgecombe was varied and extensive for new conditions demanded new changes in the law. Law never succeeds unless it corresponds to the particular needs of the age in which it exists; consequently we need not be surprised at the alarming number of peculiarities in the legislation concerning slavery. They had a particular purpose and function then that similar laws today would not have. It may be noted in the beginning, however, that most laws about slaves were passed to protect the master and not the slave.

In addition to the laws of the province there were local regulations made by the County Court of Edgecombe. The earliest of these was in 1741. It declared that "no person whatsoever, being a Christian or of Christian parentage—imported or brought into the precinct shall be deemed a servant for any term of years" unless by indenture or agreement. We have been successful in finding so far only one example of this rule

being taken advantage of by the dependent classes. Forty-odd years after it was made, in 1788, Samuel Williams, who must have been of low English descent, bound himself to George Patterson for 99 years as a servant without permission to leave his master, and to obey all the commands given to him, for food and clothing.¹⁴

According to the same ordinance, if the servants binding themselves thus should become disobedient or unruly, they might be carried before a justice of the peace and sentenced to not more than twenty lashes; if they ran away and were recaptured, they were to serve double the time lost. Moreover, the ordinance also provided that if any person should "presume to whip a Christian naked," without an order from a magistrate, such person should forfeit forty shillings proclamation money to the party injured. Servants by indenture had the privilege to carry complaints to magistrates, who might bind masters and mistresses "to answer the complaint at the next county court." If any master discharged his servant while sick, before the servant's time of service expired, the county court was to levy on the master for enough to enable the church warden of the parish to care for the sick servant until death or recovery. If the servant recovered, he became free.

The law of servants was considerably more lenient than the law of slaves. In 1753 we find an ordinance forbidding any slave to go armed with any weapon of defense or to hunt in any manner unless he should have a certificate from his master. The servants enjoyed this privilege. Later this right was restricted by another ordinance which forbade any justice of the county to give permission to any slave to carry a gun or hunt in any form unless the slave's master or mistress went on a heavy bond laying themselves liable for damages for any persons injured thereby. No slave was allowed to carry a gun on a plantation where a crop was not cultivated, and in case of cultivation, only one slave had the privilege.

In order to see that such restrictions were carried out the justices of the county court divided the county into districts, and yearly at the first court appointed freeholders in each district, duly sworn as searchers. The searchers examined

the slave quarters for weapons four times a year or more as they thought necessary. As an inducement to this office, the searchers were exempted from serving as constables or upon the roads, or in the militia, or as jurors, and did not have to pay any provincial, road, or parish tax.

November 28, 1803, after a threatened uprising of the negroes in eastern North Carolina, the regulations concerning searchers were expanded into the patrol system by the quarterly session of the Court of Pleas at Tarboro. The patrollers were to conform to rules and regulations, one copy of which was to be furnished to each and every district. During the time they were engaged the patrolmen were to be exempted from the same duties as the searchers. But if one should neglect or refuse to act, he had to forfeit and pay the sum of ten pounds.

The rules and regulations to be observed by the patrolmen of the several districts in Edgecombe County were without a doubt very strict. They provided for the patrolmen to go by night and at such times as they thought would answer the object of their appointment, to all the houses inhabited by slaves within their respective districts once every month or oftener if necessary. Any guns or fighting implements found in any of the houses or in the possession of a slave, or in any place of concealment, were to be seized and presented to the county court. Reports were made in writing, specifying the time and the place where the person or persons in whose possession or care they were found. If any circumstances indicated danger to the peace or safety of the colony, attending the finding, the patrolmen apprehended the slave or slaves on whom suspicion rested and carried him before some justice of the peace to be dealt with as the law directed. If the patrollers found any slave during night or day more than one mile from the house or the plantation in which he lived, without a paper in writing or some other strong convincing evidence of leave or orders from his owner, overseer, or employer, they or any two of them were permitted to inflict punishment, according to the opinion they entertained respecting the design of the offender, not exceeding ten lashes. On any slave they found behaving in a riotous or disorderly manner whether at or from home,

with or without written papers, they or any two of them might inflict punishment according to the circumstances of the case, not exceeding fifteen lashes, provided they were of the opinion that such riotous or disorderly behavior did not proceed from a premeditated design to disturb the public peace. But when they saw or knew of a riot or other disorderly behavior among slaves indicating danger to the peace or safety of the State, they might take and use all necessary and proper means to apprehend the offenders, and after having apprehended them, they, without inflicting any punishment other than was necessary to their safe keeping, carried the slaves before some justice of the peace who dealt with them according to law.

It is to be understood and at all times remembered that the object of patrolling was to prevent public mischief without creating private injury and, therefore, a slave found from home by day or at an early hour of the night without papers, but behaving in orderly and peaceable manner and having in his possession something known to belong to his master, overseer or employer, as a horse or an ox, or seeming to be engaged in the performance of some duty to the person to whom he owed obedience, was not necessarily punished or unreasonably restrained. The patroller or patrollers finding a slave in such situation went with the slave to his owner to know whether the story told by such a slave was true or false, and if false, then severe punishment was inflicted.

Since some owners, overseers, and employers of slaves were not capable of writing, it was further provided that a negro man of good moral character and peaceful demeanor was not to be punished for a mere act of going without a written paper on Saturday night to see his wife at a house of good fame, where he had long been accustomed to go with the consent of his master or mistress, overseer or employer, or with an order of illness by a doctor.

In 1807 new rules were adopted by the quarterly session of Common Pleas in Tarboro. The patrollers were required to call on the master, mistress or overseer as the case might be, for the names of their slaves from twelve years of age and upwards. The slaves were enrolled on a list provided and

kept for that purpose. Each succeeding time they went through their districts, the patrollmen called the names of the slaves that they had collected, and if any were missing or absent between the hours of 9 o'clock at night and 6 o'clock in the morning or on the Sabbath day, the patroller called on the master or mistress of such slave as was absent to know whether he were gone on business or by their special permit or knowledge; if neither was the case, the slave was adjudged guilty of the same crime and liable to the same punishment as if caught without permit from home. The older negroes tell how they were accustomed to line up for the roll call when the patroller came to the plantation.

Frequently a disagreement would arise between the master and the patroller with respect to the punishment of the slaves caught away from home. It was then the duty of the patroller to order the master or the mistress of the slave to bring him before some justice of the peace at a time and place which he might appoint. Whenever the master refused to comply with this demand, the patroller would apply to some justice of the peace for a warrant for such slave or slaves to appear before him or some other justice of the peace to be examined and tried for offense, in which case the cost according to law was to be paid by the owner of the slave.¹⁵

It can be said, without treading on the radicals' feelings or imposing on the abolitionists' sympathy, that the law concerning slavery was both good and bad. In some instances the slave was protected by local ordinances enacted by the Inferior Court. This is illustrated by the prevention of whipping slaves who professed Christianity.

In 1715 an act prohibiting private burial places was passed by the colonial assembly and later enforced in Edgecombe County. The frequent occurrence of several mysterious deaths led the Assembly to provide that every planter, attorney, and owner of every settled plantation should set apart a burial place, and fence the same for interring all such Christian persons, whether bound or free, that should die on the plantation. What traveler in passing through Edgecombe County is not, today, greeted with scores of little graveyards afar off on the hill extending from the farm mansion? This

is the system left from the early period of slavery and of a consequence from this law.

As a matter of precaution, there were, before the interring, three or four neighbors who were required by law to view the corpse, and ascertain whether the person came to his or her death by any violent or unlawful means. If such was the decision of the viewers, it was to be reported to the coroner. A penalty of five shillings was imposed on any one who refused to come and view the corpse. Moreover, if any persons dying were buried contrary to the law, the person or persons occasioning the same were forced to forfeit and pay the sum of ten pounds, one-third of which went to the informer, one-third to the Lords Proprietors, and the other one-third to the poor. This law, of course, excluded such cases in which it was the desire of the deceased when in his or her life time to be interred elsewhere. This law no doubt did much to prevent unnecessary slaying of the negro slaves.

The most lenient law made by the Assembly affecting slaves was made in 1753. In case a slave did not appear properly clothed and fed, and was convicted of stealing corn, cattle or hogs from any person not his owner, the injured person could maintain an action against the master and recover damages, and the slave remained unpunished by the law. This law, however, did not prevent the slave from being chastised by his master.

The law gave some liberty prior to the year 1800 that the slave was not to enjoy afterwards. No servant could be whipped, who professed to be a Christian, on his or her bare back. On the other hand we find many instances where the law forbade slaves to leave the plantation, and they were refused the right to raise horses, cattle and hogs—chickens being the only fowl allowed, and in statute of 1777 we find it unlawful for any slave in the county to grow tobacco for his own use under the penalty of five pounds current money for every five hundred hills so cultivated, which was to be recovered from the master or overseer. Yet the slave was not treated as a beast. On the eve of the Revolutionary War a more humane law protected the slave from wilful and malicious killing. After May 5, 1774, any person found guilty of a premeditated

act of wilful murder of his slave was to be tried by the same law and the same fine was imposed as if the slave had been a freeman.

During the Revolution the slaves in various sections of the county took the opportunity of becoming free. Masters, especially Loyalists, were freeing their slaves, and to such an alarming extent that a law was passed by the Assembly on November 12, 1777, forbidding a master to free his slave except for meritorious service, and then at such times only as the county court allowed the decision and gave a license of good faith. There are a few instances where the slave owners were debarred from freeing negroes by this law.¹⁶

Occasionally through the graciousness of the master a slave was freed irrespective of the law, and the negro took chances for his freedom by hiding in the swamps and numerous reed marshes in the county. This gave the slave dealers opportunities to recapture negroes and sell them again, when the poor slave was so unfortunate as not to find one to plead his case. Many trading vessels made frequent trips up the Pamlico and Tar Rivers, bringing various commodities of interest to the negroes and finally enticing them away from their hiding places under profession of friendship. English traders came up Tar River under a pretext to trade with the slaves in order to decoy the hidden negroes away. A law was passed by the Assembly preventing the Englishmen from trading with slaves or carrying them away. In 1791 a law was passed to prevent the merchant or trader to harbor or trade with any slave under any pretense. This no doubt prevented the negroes from hiding and also from being carried off and resold.

In many instances the slaves in their attempt to get away from the county forged passes. The Assembly made it punishable by death for a slave to attempt such methods of escape.

The slave who was set free without being adjudged and allowed by the court of the county and license issued, after an expiration of six months, was taken up by the church wardens and sold as a slave at the next court at public outcry, and the value of the slave was given to the poor. There are three cases where the negroes were sold at the Tarboro courthouse in 1800. It is not known how much the poor received, however.

In 1781 an ordinance permitted the masters to rent their slaves out by public auction to the highest bidder for any term not exceeding one year. Regular hiring days held in January were established at the courthouse in Tarboro. Frequently men who had large estates consisting of negroes provided in their wills for the slaves to be hired out and the money paid over to their widows for a continuous income. There are several instances in which negro laborers were rented at the Tarboro courthouse. The average price about 1800 ranged from \$150 to \$200 a year for men, and \$65 to \$90 for women. By 1856 prices had increased and advanced from the time the custom began. Negro men hired for \$165 to \$200 a year—plow boys and women from \$100 to \$125. In 1859, a year later, the price increased considerably over 1858. Corn field hands, girls from 8 to 10 years old, brought \$25 to \$30; 10 to 12 years old \$80 to \$85, while boys from 15 to 18 years brought \$180 to \$202. Men brought unheard of prices, varying from \$175 to \$250.¹⁷ All this personal property was put in a heap together and bidden off as public service.¹⁸ But one remembers that the first law applying to slaves was a clause in the Fundamental Constitution giving every freeman an "absolute power and authority over negro slaves of what opinion or religion soever."¹⁹

The manner of trying slaves in colonial days was very interesting with respect to the method of economizing time. A slave committing an offense, crime, or misdemeanor was committed by the justice of the peace to the "common goal of the county," and the sheriff of the county upon the committment certified the same to the justice of commission of the county court. The justice issued a summons for two or more justices of the court and four freeholders, such as had owned slaves in the county to constitute a court. The three justices and the four slaveholders were authorized and required upon oath to try all manner of crimes and offenses that were committed by any slaves at the courthouse of the county, and to take evidence and confession of the defender on the oath of one or two creditable witnesses or such testimony of negroes or mulattoes bond or free, with circumstances that were con-

vincing to the justices and to the slave owners, without the "solemnity of a jury."

In order to try slaves, when the offense was of a small and usual nature, and to prevent delay and great loss of time and expense to the owners, a law, as an act for remedy, was passed in 1783. This law provided for all justices to have the power to issue subpoenas, if necessary, to compel the attendance of witnesses and to proceed immediately upon the trial of any slave and to pass sentence and award judgment; provided however, the punishment extended no farther than the ordering of the defendant to be whipped not exceeding forty lashes.

Any justice of the peace of the county, who was an owner of slaves, was qualified, irrespective of moral integrity, and pronounced fit by the court to act as a member of the county court though he or they should not be summoned thereto. The law was emphatically stated by the phrase "anything before contained to the contrary, in any wise notwithstanding."

Christian character was an important element in slavery. It made the slave more desirable and it also influenced the courts and masters to show leniency to the slaves and to treat them with more mildness and gratitude. In case a slave was not a Christian, it was produced as evidence on the trial against him for capital and other trials of crime. He was charged very severely and placed under greater obligation to tell the truth. It was, therefore, declared by an act of the Assembly in 1741 as a source of protection against perjury, that when any negro or mulatto, bond or free, should upon due proof made or "pregnant circumstance," appearing before the county court, be found to have given a false testimony, he was, without further trial, to have by order of the court one ear nailed to the pillory, and stand in this position for the space of one hour, and then have the same ear cut off, and the other ear nailed in the same manner and cut off at the expiration of one hour, and moreover to have thirty-nine lashes well laid on his or her back at the common whipping post. As a method of prevention of false testimony the chairman of the court charged each negro or mulatto in capital cases before his or her testimony, on not being a Christian, to tell the truth.

There was a case about 1771 and also another in 1825 in which a negro man called Siman was given a mild sentence according to this law. For false testimony he was branded in the palm of his right hand with a hot iron and imprisoned in close jail for twelve months.²⁰

The most noted case in the history of slavery in Edgecombe and also the greatest in the entire State was that of *State vs. Will*. The trial was held by Judge Donnell in the circuit court, January 22, 1834. It was a case that awakened a general and profound interest throughout the country and influenced the legal relation between the master and his slave in North Carolina. It recognized the right of the slave to defend himself against the assaults of his master in the preservation of his own life—a right never asserted heretofore in the county.

A slave, Will, was indicted for the murder of Richard Baxter. Will belonged to James S. Battle, and the deceased, Richard Baxter, was the overseer of Mr. Battle, and was entrusted with the management of the slave at the time of the homicide. Early in the morning of the 22d day of January, the day the killing took place, Will had a dispute with another slave, Allen, who was also a slave of Mr. Battle, and a foreman on the same plantation of which the deceased was an overseer. The dispute arose between Will and Allen about a hoe which Will claimed as his own because he had helved it in his own time; but Allen directed another slave to use it on that day.

Some angry words passed between Will and the foreman, and Will broke out the helve, and walked off about one-fourth of a mile to a cotton screw and began packing cotton. Soon after the dispute Mr. Baxter, the overseer, was informed of what had occurred. He immediately went into the house, and his wife was heard to say, "I would not, my dear," to which he was said to have replied in a positive tone of voice, "I will." In a very short time after this Mr. Baxter went from the house to the place where the foreman was, told him that he was going after Will, and instructed him to take his cowhide and follow at a distance. Mr. Baxter then returned to the house, took his gun, saddled his horse, and rode to the screw,

a distance of about six hundred yards, where Will was at work.

The overseer came up within twenty or twenty-five feet of the screw without being observed by the slave, dismounted, and hastily got over the fence into the screwyard. He walked directly to the cotton screw, gun in hand, where the slave was standing, engaged in throwing cotton, and ordered him to come down. The slave took off his hat in an humble manner and came down. Mr. Baxter spoke some words to Will, which were not heard by any of the three negroes present. The slave immediately began to run. He proceeded about fifteen steps when the overseer fired upon him, sending the whole load into the negro's back.

The wound caused by the shot was sufficient to have produced death, but the slave continued to make off through a field, and after retreating about 150 yards in sight of the overseer, was pursued by two slaves directed by Mr. Baxter, who said, "He could not go far." The overseer himself, laying down his gun, mounted his horse, and having directed his foreman, who had just come up, to pursue the prisoner also, rode around the field and headed off the wounded slave. Mr. Baxter soon dismounted and pursued the negro on foot, and as soon as the slave discovered he was blocked, he changed his course to avoid the overseer, and ran in another direction towards the woods. The overseer, however, soon overtook him and collared him with his right hand. In the meantime the negroes ordered to pursue the slave came toward Will and the overseer.

They were ordered by Mr. Baxter to seize the wounded slave. One of them attempted to lay hold of the negro, who had his knife drawn, and the left thumb of the overseer in his mouth. When the slave came up, Will struck at him with his knife, but missed him and cut the overseer on the thigh. In the scuffle which followed between Will and Mr. Baxter, the overseer received an ugly wound in the arm.

Soon after the overseer let go his hold, the slave ran towards the nearest wood and escaped. Mr. Baxter did not pursue the slave, but he ordered the negroes to do so, but soon recalled them. When they returned, Mr. Baxter was sitting

on the ground bleeding, and as they came up, the overseer said, "Will has killed me; if I had minded what my poor wife said, I would not have been in this fix."

In addition to the wound on his thigh, Mr. Baxter had a slight puncture in his chest about skin deep, and a wound about four inches long and two inches deep on his right arm above his elbow, which was inflicted by the slave. The loss of blood occasioned the overseer's death, and he died in the evening of the same day. In the meantime, the slave went to his master and surrendered himself and the following day was arrested. When the negro was informed of the death of the overseer he exclaimed, "Is it possible?" and appeared to be much affected by the report.

The case was called by the court. The jury hesitated to pronounce Will guilty of felony and murder according to the indictment specified and charged against him by the court. The jurors were altogether ignorant of the law, since there was no precedent in the case. They requested the advice of the court upon the matter. In the meantime, Judge Donnell claimed the slave was guilty of "feloniously killing and slaying" Mr. Baxter, and pronounced the sentence of death from the special verdict which had been made by the jury. The slave appealed to the Supreme Court. B. F. Moore, one of the most famous pleaders of the North Carolina bar, then living on Fishing Creek, interceded for Will and defended his case in the Supreme Court. It was conceded that Baxter occupied the place of master, and, in his capacity of overseer, was invested with all the authority of owner, in the means of rendering the prisoner subservient to his lawful commands. With this concession freely made, it was believed that if the shot of Mr. Baxter had proved fatal, he would have been guilty of murder, and not of manslaughter. The instrument used and the short distance between the parties were sufficient to produce death, and nothing but the want of malice could have deprived the act of any features of murder.

It was then shown that Baxter had loaded his gun and proceeded to the cotton screw with the intent to shoot the slave if the latter should run. It was clear then that if Baxter's shot had been fatal, he would have been guilty of murder

and not of manslaughter. This was evident from his whole conduct and particularly so from his directing the foreman to walk behind at a distance. If he had armed himself for defense, expecting a conflict with the prisoner, he would have summoned aid and kept men at his command ready for encounter. It became evident to the defendant's mind that the purpose of the shooting had actually been formed and time had been given him for reflection. The argument by Mr. Moore on behalf of Will was therefore as follows: first, that if Baxter's shot had killed the prisoner, Baxter would have been guilty of manslaughter at the least; second, this position being established the killing of Baxter under the circumstances related was but manslaughter on the part of the prisoner.

The public mind, however, was perverted by opinion in the county that any means might be resorted to in order to bring about the perfect submission of the slave to his master's will, and that any resistance to that will, reasonable or unreasonable, lawfully placed the life of a slave at his master's feet. Mr. Moore attempted to draw the line, if there was any, between the lawful and unlawful exercise of the master's power in Edgecombe County.

The decision in the case of *State vs. Mann*²¹ was used as a precedent. This case *left the slave when his life was spared under the slender guardianship of the "frowns and execrations" of a moral sentiment against cruelty*. Judge Henderson, who rendered the decision fixed the true boundary of the master's power. "It extends," he says, "to securing the service and labors of the slave, and no farther." He furthermore declared that a power over the life of the slave was not surrendered by the law because the possession of such a power is always necessary to the purposes of slavery, and that his life was in care of the law. Therefore, said Mr. Moore, the previous law, which declared the relation of master and slave, and had been practiced in Edgecombe since its formation, should no longer cover the entire relation between master and slave. On the contrary the idea of perfect submission of the slave was in accordance with the policy which should regulate condition of life, whenever it existed.

It is safe to say that Mr. Moore did not, however, argue so much from the point of law—which if it had been interpreted literally would have been decidedly against him—as he did the force of an opinion developing in the court, which was contrary to the use of absolute power. Indeed the courts of the country reflected this opinion and so fostered an enlightened benevolence. When we view the proceedings of the early courts and the sentiments of the people, we cannot but help admitting that while the courts were lauding the Christian spirit of the times, manifested by the humane treatment of the slaves, they were engaged in investigating to what possible extent the master might push his authority without incurring civil responsibility.

From this viewpoint Mr. Moore made his plea one of a moral nature. “I am,” he said, “arguing no question of abstract right, but I am endeavoring to prove that the natural incidents of slavery must be borne with because they are inherent to the condition itself; and that any attempt to restrain or punish a slave for the exercise of a right, which even absolute power cannot destroy, is inhuman and without the slightest benefit to the security of the master or to that of society at large.

“If,” continued Mr. Moore, “the deceased had been resisted, a great degree of force might have been used, and the law would not have been scrupulous in determining the excess. If he had been chastising the prisoner in the ordinary mode and death had ensued, it would have been nothing more than an unfortunate accident. But the prisoner was neither resisting the master nor did the calamity grow out of an attempt to chastise. It is confidently contended that a master has not by law of the land the right to kill his slave for a simple act of disobedience, however provoking may be the circumstances under which it is committed; that if a slave be required to stand and he run off, he has not forfeited his life. This is conclusive, if the law will never justify a homicide except it be committed upon unavoidable necessity, and will excuse no one, except it be done by misadventure or *se defendendo*. There is no principle of criminal law which will justify or excuse the

death that has been caused through the provocation of the passion alone."

Moreover, it was shown by Mr. Moore that the prisoner was shot in the act of making off from his overseer, who was prepared to chastise him. A master's authority to apprehend the slave was conceded by the court not to be greater than that of a constable or a sheriff to arrest for misdemeanor; and a constable could not kill in order to prevent an escape of one guilty of that kind of offense. The law had such a high regard for human life that it instructed the officers to permit an escape rather than kill. If the officer acted illegally, by abusing his authority or exceeding it, resistance unto death was not murder. Consequently, if the master had greater authority to apprehend his slave than a law officer had to arrest under a precept for a misdemeanor, he surely did not have a greater authority than a sheriff, acting under a precept, had to arrest a felon. Here the law again showed its deep regard for human life and its hesitation to kill a felon, a murderer, or traitor unless his escape be inevitable. "And in every instance in which one man can be justified in killing another, the abuse of his power makes him guilty of manslaughter." Thus an officer who had the right to kill a felon in order to prevent his escape was guilty of manslaughter when the escape could have been prevented by more lenient means. This necessity remained to be proved, said Mr. Moore, for it was never to be presumed. No such necessity appeared in the finding of the jury. In legal contemplation, therefore, it did not exist.

The prisoner was thus looked upon as in an act of disobedience and not resistance, between which there was a vast difference. The deceased then must have exceeded his authority according to the evidence and the defendant was guilty of manslaughter only. The slave simply slew his overseer, after having been dangerously shot, pursued and overtaken. The tamest and most domestic brute would doubtless have done likewise. Was the victim now to be a sacrifice offered to the policy which regulated the relation of slavery among our fathers? May we say that the momentum of feeling, acting through the juries of the county and the spirit of the Supreme Court at Raleigh, indicated that the interests of society were at stake and de-

manded a permanent settlement of the extent of a master's authority?

By a timely and judicious administration of the law, in relation to this subject, the Supreme Court by releasing Will did much to form a sounder public opinion by liberating the slave from the charges of murder. The legal condition of the slave was greatly advanced for the negro and the whites were now, by the decision returned in Will's case, placed under the very same law.²¹ Will returned to his master and served him until death.

SLAVE PRICES

A very interesting phase of the slave system in the county was the method of ascertaining the age and value of the slaves. Whenever a slaveholder was desirous of learning the age of his slave,²² he carried the slave before the grand jury convened at the county court and the court pronounced the age of the slave.

Quite frequently slaves were slain both accidentally and premeditatedly. In either case the slayer if detected was responsible to the owner for the value of the slave killed. Men who were familiar with certain slaves were summoned as a jury to estimate their value. George Sugg, a farmer living in the eastern part of the county, was called upon in 1806 to estimate the value of a slave killed upon an adjoining farm. The slave was a runaway and belonged to Mr. Mace. He was robbing the citizens in the vicinity of Little River, now Fishing Creek, when William Mace, a manager for his father, went in search for the slave. Mr. Mace tarried at Little River approximately five days, but not finding the slave was about to return home. On his way back he visited the slave quarters of Mr. Toole, a slave owner, in the night. A light was observed within, but it was put out in a moment. Mr. Mace went in and blowing up a light saw the slave, Tom, and recognized him. The slave, on being discovered, attempted to escape. Mr. Mace called to him to stand, threatening to shoot him if he did not, but the slave ran, upon which Mr. Mace fired. It was the design of Mr. Mace to shoot over the negro's head in order to frighten him, but some of the shots hit and killed

him instantly. The court passed the opinion that the negro was worth fifty pounds.

In the valuation of a slave, his behavior and power of workmanship were always taken into consideration by the courts. Our record of the prices of slaves is very incomplete. In 1785 John Ford sold one negro man to Jeremiah Hilliard for 180 pounds.²³ In 1788 one negro boy about eight years old sold in Tarboro for forty-five pounds, or \$203.25.²⁵ Joseph Buns sold a negro woman in 1788 for 60 pounds to John Dew and at the same time a negro girl, 16 years old, was sold to a Virginia planter for 90 pounds. A year later negro boys about sixteen or seventeen years old sold for 120 pounds each.

In 1790 John Dew sold a negro woman back to Buns for 50 pounds.²⁵ Girls about eleven years old brought 70 pounds in the slave market in Tarboro in 1790. These are some of the estimates of slave prices in the early history in the county. Later slaves brought 100 pounds per head.²⁶ Richard Blackledge, of Tarboro, sold a negro boy about thirteen to sixteen years, four feet, eight inches high, for 200 milled dollars.

Halifax traders made frequent trips to Edgecombe for slaves to start a slave market. Jacob Barrow, of Halifax, purchased slaves at Tarboro in 1789 at a normal price of 120 pounds and in 1792 negro men at the age of forty-five brought 100 pounds, about the same price as in 1790.

In 1794 a negro woman and child brought 200 Spanish milled dollars, and numerous other negroes brought about the same price.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century slaves brought a good price. In 1801 at open court Bennett Barrow, a slave trader, sold to John Davidson six slaves, as follows: a woman named Millery and her three children named Harmon, Jim, and Molley, and another woman named Nelly and a child named Sam for 400 pounds. Some further evidence can be obtained from the following figures: in 1803 one negro boy sold for \$125 current money, another boy sold for \$475, still another woman and her child brought 400 silver dollars. In 1770 a negro woman fifteen years old and her child sold for \$375 and a negro girl ten years old for \$135

current money. We have to consider that physical condition and the early cultivation of cotton may have been the reason for so many enormous changes in prices. Moreover, the ability a slave had for work, trade, etc., determined in many instances the price of his body. One negro man who was a blacksmith and a good workman brought \$1,000 in Tarboro in 1818, and in 1854 a rough carpenter about twenty-three years old sold for \$2,000.²⁷

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century slaves were estimated by "piles" or quantities. The records give an account of a pile of negroes as follows: Moll, Suckey, Sally, Maria, Molly, Austen, Daniah, one negro woman twenty-three years old and infant child, negro girl and negro boy, one negro man nineteen years old, one negro woman and two children, and a negro fellow thirty years old, a negro boy fifteen years old, and girl fifteen years old, sold for the sum of \$5,111.

Another method was resorted to in the estimation of the value of slaves. It was not, however, the most accurate one. Frequently masters would become short of funds and be unable to pay their taxes promptly, and slaves were sold at public auction at the court house to indemnify the sheriff for the taxes of the master. In 1838 an incident of this kind occurred when a negro girl was sold to the highest bidder for \$177. Again in 1843 a negro man was sold to B. F. Moore, of Fishing Creek, at a public auction in default of taxes for one dollar.²⁸ This was not a fair sample of the value of slaves, and must have been primarily to bring the cost of taxes levied.

SOCIAL LIFE

The peculiar life of the slave is interesting from the view point of character, socially and religiously. Only now and then, according to old slaveholders' records, was a slave found truthful, faithful, and entirely honest in dealing with labor and articles. Cunning and deception were inevitable habits. The old trick played on the master by turning a huge pot with its mouth upon the floor of the master's residence, in order to deaden the noise while the negroes danced, was considered part of the slave's right. It was not fair to expect anything else of him.

The main cause of certain restraints in the slave's liberty came in 1859, in the form of John Brown's raid. The press began to urge masters throughout the state to curtail the large freedom enjoyed by the negroes. Consequently the Edgecombe Court passed a regulation forbidding negroes to assemble in groups between sunset and sunrise. Upon this event came the agitation for a new movement advocated by a book called "The Impending Crisis of the South," published in New York in 1857 by Hinton Rowan Helper, a native of Rowan County, but was not widely read until the time of John Brown's raid. This book was a compilation of statistics intended to prove that slavery was an economic curse. In addition it contained sentiments usually expected from abolition quarters in the North. The slave owner naturally rejected the literature and the cause of abolition propagandism.

The marriage of the slaves was a matter of little ceremony. The masters of the contracting parties first gave their consent to the union. That being arranged, the groom sought the bride, offered her some toy, a brass ring or beads, and if his gift was accepted, the marriage was considered made. If the couple ever separated, the present was always returned. Separation occurred often, and at times against the will of the parties. "If the woman bore no children in two or three years," says Bricknell, "the planter obliged them to take a second, third, fourth, fifth, or more husbands or bed-fellows—a fruitful woman amongst them being much valued by the planters and a numerous issue esteemed the great riches in the county." The children belonged to the owner of the mother, and the planter took pains to bring them up properly.

Although the slaves were permitted to marry among themselves, after 1787 no slave was allowed to marry or cohabit with any free negro without permission of the master of the slave in writing, and the sanction of two justices of the peace.²⁹

The slaves showed great jealousy among themselves on account of their wives and mistresses.

The slaves owned by the first settlers were very few, but those settlers who succeeded them had large numbers. Accustomed to settling down on little farms on the outskirts of civilization, the early farmers found it hard to become ab-

sorbed into the larger life of a settled community. It has most often been their fate to recover from nature a rim of forest land, and then giving that up to some "worldly habitant of civilized life," move on toward the West. This was a frequent occurrence in Edgecombe County in the early period. Before the county was declared an organized district, and existed merely as a precinct, many people who occupied their little holdings during the seventeenth century sold them early in the eighteenth and sought other lands on the frontiers. The newcomers were men of means and usually brought their slaves with them. Men like Elisha Battle, Willie Jones, and Isaac Sessums and others came to the county with money and slaves to buy up the cheap lands. There is one instance where a man from Virginia bought eleven adjacent plantations. On these plantations on which small farmers had formerly lived, there now lived a large planter with his family and a large number of slaves. Hence we have a gradual change of the social life as this economic process went on.

The coming of these rich owners mark the change from the system of a few slaves to that of many. The same process was facilitated in the opening up of the turpentine industry. Here the slaves were profitable and large numbers of them were taken to the high tracts of long straw pine which lay back from the low grounds of Swift and Fishing Creeks and Tar River.³⁰

RELIGIOUS LIFE

There is no phase of the subject on which we have no more incomplete and unsatisfactory records than on the subject of the religious and social life of the slaves. The early writers said that the slaves in the colony, hence in the several counties, except in rare cases, were undoubtedly pagans. From all indications after the introduction of slaves the people seem to have been content that they should have remained such. Indeed, if we may believe such contemporary evidence that has come down to us, the whites did not care much for religion themselves.

The one central fact that led to the indifference to religion of the slaves on the part of the whites was the thought of the illegality in holding a Christian in bondage. The right

and power of enslaving the negro seems to have been based on the fact that he was a pagan. If such was the case, would not conversion enfranchise him? It was in view of this feeling that the Lords Proprietors declared in the Fundamental Constitution: "Since charity obliges us to wish well to the souls of all men, and religion ought to alter nothing in any man's civil estate or right it shall be lawful for slaves as well as for others to enter themselves and be of what church or profession any of them shall think best, and thereof be as fully members as any freeman. But yet no slave shall hereby be exempted from that civil dominion his master hath over him, but be in all things in the same state and condition he was in before."

This law was a piece of skilful manipulation on the part of the Lords Proprietors. It gave an emphatic religious freedom to the slave, and at the same time gave a concealed compromise to prevent an agitation and uprising of the slaves. There seemed, however, to have been in spite of this law, a fear of allowing slaves to be baptized in a religious rite. The law might have been used successfully to protect the planters, should a case have arisen over the point in question, and yet is left an element of risk in it that made the planters unwilling to allow the conversion of the negroes.

The conditions that followed these circumstances are clearly seen from a statement of Reverend Charles Edward Taylor, a clergyman of the English Church, who on a tour in 1765 writes that he went to Edgecombe County on a preaching tour and did not have much success, there being no minister there at that time, the Reverend John Burges, the first English preacher in the county, having resigned previously. He baptized in three days 159 whites and four black infants.³¹ There is no intimation in the reports of Reverend M. N. Burges that he was ever interested enough in the slave to attempt baptizing him.

In a letter to the Bishop of London, Reverend Mr. Moir reports that he had completed the building of the parish church, at Tarborough, November 22, 1748, and that he had baptized in one day 100 children and dipped two adults. He does not mention having baptized any negroes. On April 8, 1760, however, he reported having baptized three adult negroes and

206 children. From this report Mr. Moir seems to have been an arduous worker, but Governor Dobbs attested his statement in a letter to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, January 22, 1760: "I wish that your admonition of Mr. Moir to have good effect. I observe in his report to you he mentions having baptized above 300 white people and fifty negroes in one year. I wish that it might be true, as I am informed that he does very little duty, but lives on his plantation, not showing hospitality as is his duty, and hoarding up money to return to England." Mr. Moir in return accused Governor Dobbs of being prejudiced against him and hindering his work. Governor Dobbs' successor, Governor Tryon, however, confirmed Governor Dobbs' statement on a letter dated July 26, 1765, which says: "I do not think that the province receives any benefit from the Reverend Mr. Moir as an itinerant missionary, for under his license to preach everywhere, he seldom preaches anywhere. I do not represent him as an immoral man, but think it would be advisable that he might be fixed to some parish."

Under these circumstances, where even the whites were obviously neglected in spiritual development, what may be a conclusion as to the negro's opportunities in moral matters?

The method of instructing the slave in the religious affairs prior to the coming of new denominations was entirely according to the notions of the clergymen, so far as we know. In the earliest days the settlers of the county did not put themselves to the trouble to try to convert their slaves. In the later period, as we shall presently see, they became more interested. Not only did the masters prevent the negroes from accepting religion, but in 1787 an act of the Legislature prevented any negro or mulatto to "entertain any slave in his or her house during the Sabbath, during the night between sunset and sunrise on penalty of twenty shillings for the first offense and forty shillings for each subsequent offense." No assembling of slaves was tolerated unless some white man was present.

When later in the period of slavery the system became more mild, the negroes were allowed to join any church they might fancy, but they were not permitted to have a church organization among themselves. To have one was at once against the policy of the English Church and against the senti-

ments of the planters. The planters feared that negro churches might become centers of negro conspiracies.

The Baptists came into the eastern counties at an early date. By the middle of the eighteenth century they had become strong in the eastern part of Halifax and Edgecombe counties. Mr. Burnett, a missionary of the Established Church, said that they allowed negroes to speak at their churches. Their kind feeling for the slaves is shown by a reply of the Kehukee Baptist Association at Falls Church, to a question asked in 1783, in regard to the duty of a master towards his slave who refused to attend family worship. The answer was: "It is the duty of every master of a family to give his slaves liberty to attend worship of God in his family, and likewise it is his duty to exhort them to it, and to endeavor to convince them of their duty, and then to leave them to their choice."³²

The doctrines of Baptist and Methodist churches appealed to the popular mind, and stirred the hearts of the middle, and even to a large extent, the higher classes of society. Other churches had negro members, but none in such large numbers as these. There were several Presbyterians in the county, but unfortunately we have no conclusive evidence as to their relation to slavery. In both the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches, the negroes were mostly slaves of the families who had their membership there, and consequently were affected only in so far as they were servants.

In all denominations the negroes had equal rights in instruction and communion, but were deprived of participation in the operation of the church government. When there were only a few negro members, they attended services with the whites, and a certain portion of the church, in the form of a large gallery, was assigned to them. There are today several old Baptist Churches in the county which retain their old galleries over the front entrance for negro worshippers. It is not an infrequent sight to see slave time darkies now assembling in their accustomed places when the First Sunday preaching begins. When there was a large number of negroes, they were given a separate sermon, usually after the whites had dispersed. In the vicinity of one of the Methodist churches in the county today, "Temperance Hall," the writer was told of

slaves as in the other churches. Sometimes there were special gatherings there by the negroes after the whites had gone to their respective homes.

There were only a few negro preachers, and a majority of the preaching was done by white preachers. The great influence that a preacher exercised over his flock was something that the whites very properly would not have surrendered to the negro preacher, had they been ever so numerous.

In 1831 a strict law was passed forbidding the slaves and free negroes to preach, exhort or hold prayer meetings. This in many respects was a harsh law, and in most cases in the county, as elsewhere, was not strictly enforced. The white preachers in their attempt to be apprehensive and to preach such sermons as the negroes need, emphasized the duty of servants to masters from the text, "Servants obey your masters." The more independent among the blacks, especially among the mulattoes, rejected this kind of preaching. To them it seemed merely a white man religion, and but another means of making the bonds of servitude more secure.

It was the custom to send some quiet old preacher of great kindness, humility, and usually of ability to the task of preaching to the negroes. It is clearly shown in the respects that the negroes were very devoted to their preacher, and I have been told by some of our oldest citizens, showed their appreciation of his service by frequent presents, such as food and articles of personal wear.

For the negroes on the plantation who joined the neighboring churches, special instruction was often provided. Such at least was shown from the report of Bishop Atkinson of the Episcopal Church. In the Diocesan Convention, 1856, he reported that he appointed Mr. William Murphy some months before to officiate at Wilson and Rocky Mount, taking charge at the same time of religious instruction of the slaves of Mr. Turner Battle and his sister. Bishop Atkinson himself a few years later preached in Rocky Mount one afternoon and administered the communion, and in the evening preached to the slaves of Mr. Battle and his sister. In the Episcopal Church the negro members must have been slaves of the white members since the Episcopalians were largely slaveholders. Us-

ally the colored people occupied the seats reserved for the missions for the slaves. Captain T. W. Battle had one, but discontinued it after a year because the slaves took no interest. There seems also to have been one in connection with the church at Tarborough that was permanent.

It is notable to observe that there was an encouraging indication of increasing interest in the religious instruction of the slaves prior to the Civil War. Ministers were employed by masters to aid them in this part of their duty. In the earlier period of the Diocese, Mr. Murphy was employed by the Battle family to promote a religious spirit among the slaves.³³

It appears from the results of the religious training or social life of the slaves that they were either more or less content or because of the rigid laws they were afraid to uprising, since there is but one record of an insurrection even rumored in Edgecombe County. It may not be inappropriate to mention that one incident in conclusion.

NEGRO INSURRECTION DURING THE REVOLUTION

While the province was arming for the Revolution, negro uprisings were especially dreaded. This induced the colonists to increase their patrol. In Pitt, Beaufort, Martin, and Edgecombe counties in 1775, the report was spread that a certain ship captain whose name was Johnson, of White Haven, and who was then loading naval stores in the Pamlico River, was inciting the negroes to rebellion. The alleged plan was to the effect that through the teachings of Captain Johnson all the slaves in that region had to agree to murder on a certain night all the whites where they (the slaves) lived. They were to proceed from house to house toward the interior of the province, murdering as they went. Here they were told they would find the inhabitants and governor ready to help them.³⁴ Johnson was just sailing at that time, and he was reported to have said that he would return in the autumn and take his choice of the plantations on the river. The whites it seemed believed the story and for a while the whole region was in a fever of excitement. The "terrified people pursued an imaginary band of 150 negroes for several days, but none were

taken or seen, though they had several times been fired at." This was as near a discovery of the real movement as they ever came to, and marks the only account of the first and last indication of any slave insurrection in the county.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Colonial Records, Vol. III, p. 431.

² Colonial Records, Vol. I, pp. 41, 602, 715; Vol. VI, pp. 745, 1026.

³ Later the importation of slavery ceased, and the steadiness of this increase indicates that it was due entirely to births.

⁴ Colonial Records, Vol. I, pp. 80.

⁵ Colonial Records, Vol. III, pp. 102, 101; Vol. V, pp. 1133; Vol. VII, pp. 22.

⁶ Colonial Records, Vol. IV, p. 60.

⁷ John Alston bought 19 slaves, John Pope 6 white servants, while Elisha Battle bought 11 plantations and brought 10 slaves from Virginia at late as 1735.

⁸ Edgecombe was originally a part of Bertie Precinct.

⁹ Colonial Records, Vol. V, pp. 144, 145, 314.

¹⁰ Colonial Records, Vol. V, p. 315.

¹¹ Colonial Records, Vol. III; Vol. I, p. 720.

¹² Granville County was cut off from Edgecombe in 1747, making a considerable decrease in the original number.

¹³ Due to the formation of Halifax County in 1757.

¹⁴ Book IV, RR Tarboro, p. 640.

¹⁵ Inferior Court Records, 1799-1811, Tarboro, North Carolina.

¹⁶ There is no more evidence of emancipating slaves in the court records until 1835. From this time until the War between the States, slaves were frequently emancipated by their various masters. In 1851 several slave masters in the county liberated their slaves, while Jacob Mettles, a prominent planter, emancipated six at one time and shipped them to Liberia on board the "Morgan Dix" from Baltimore.

¹⁷ Tarboro Southerner, January 15, 1859.

¹⁸ Colonial Records, Vol. I, p. 204.

¹⁹ Tarboro Southerner, January 9, 1859.

²⁰ Minute Docket B, 1825-1834, p. S. 1826 L.

²¹ 2 Dev. 263.

²² It was necessary to know the age of slaves in order to determine the selling price of said slave, the value being fixed according to age, etc.

²³ Book IV, p. 642, RD Tarboro.

²⁴ Book IV, p. 640, RD Tarboro.

²⁵ Book V, p. 416, RD Tarboro.

²⁶ Book V, pp. 232, 248, RD Tarboro.

²⁷ Tarboro Southerner, January 14, 1854.

²⁸ Book 24, p. 2, RD Tarboro.

²⁹ Ordinance made in Tarboro, 1787, p. 610, N. C.

³⁰ Colonial Records, Vol. III, p. 431.

³¹ Colonial Records, Vol. IX, 326.

³² Biggs' History Kehukee Asso., pp. 59, 60.

³³ Bishop's N. C., p. 158.

³⁴ Governor Martin was principally the instigator of this rebellion. He desired to cause trouble for the rebellion colonists.

METHODIST EXPANSION IN NORTH CAROLINA AFTER THE REVOLUTION *

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First of all, I wish to pay a tribute. Seven years ago at the meeting of this Society I listened with rapt attention to an address on "Some First Things in North Carolina Methodism." It stimulated my interest, already aroused by the speaker's first volume, and I went home to watch with eager expectation for the announcement of the second volume of his "History of Methodism in North Carolina." Alas! earth's mortality claimed Dr. Grissom before his work was completed. For years he searched the records, collected manuscripts, and travelled far and near—a veritable itinerant of Methodist history—in order to tell the story of his church's achievement in the state of his nativity. His method was so thorough and his perspective so well integrated in the general trend of American history, that his loss is felt by those interested in the social as well as the ecclesiastical history of North Carolina.

Of all this I have a peculiar sense. A general study of the political and social history of North Carolina from the close of the revolution to 1860 has led me to the question of religious development. For Methodism I have found no continuous guide, this being the period which would have been covered by Dr. Grissom's second volume. However, I take the liberty of presenting a general survey of religious movements from the close of the revolution through the first decade of the nineteenth century, with special reference to Methodism, with an earnest appeal for criticism as to facts and their interpretation and an earnest hope that some member of this society has already undertaken Dr. Grissom's unfinished task.

The Revolutionary War shattered the religious forces of North Carolina. Readjustment to a new regime was as much a problem for the churches as for industry, trade, and political thought. For this statistics bear witness. In 1790 the population of the state was 393,751, 50,000 of whom were

* An address before the North Carolina Conference Historical Society at Wilmington, N. C., Nov. 30, 1915.

heads of families. The exact proportion of church members cannot be ascertained, but 30,000 is a liberal estimate, leaving an uncultivated spiritual field of 363,751 souls. Yet the condition within the churches was not very favorable for the task before them. The Presbyterians had probably the largest membership. They were strongly intrenched in the piedmont and along the upper Cape Fear; but most of the loyalists in North Carolina were of Presbyterian stock and after the revolution many of the Scotch on the Cape Fear emigrated. In the piedmont section a number of the Presbyterian pastors had been active in the Revolutionary cause, notably Humphrey Hunter and Thomas McCaule, who served in the army; but for this very reason some of the congregations had declined. Moreover strict Calvinistic thought and discipline often leads to spiritual revolt; witness Rousseau in France, the English deists, and Benjamin Franklin in America. It is not strange, therefore, to find that in North Carolina the traditions of Calvinism were seriously questioned at the close of the war. "The pastors shed tears over departed worth," lost in battle, we are told, "but they grieved most over the living who had renounced the religion of their fathers, and embraced a cold skepticism that promised only a life of licentiousness and the vain hope of annihilation." The Baptists had the largest opportunity in North Carolina. They covered a greater territory than any other denomination, being grouped in two associations, the Kehukee in the east and the Sandy Creek in the piedmont, the latter being the third oldest association of Baptists in the United States. Their rapid growth in the South toward the middle of the eighteenth century was little less than a profound social movement. This extremely democratic organization fitted in well with the ideals of the plain people while the style of preaching and type of thought made a popular appeal. The Baptist membership in 1790 was 7,742, surpassed only by the Presbyterians who with the Independents had been estimated at 9,000 in 1762. But there were certain inherent weaknesses in the denomination. Individualism was too strongly intrenched in its polity for an organized diffusion of the faith; the Arminian doctrines so notable in the early days of the Sandy Creek Association had become dormant,

and there was a strong tendency toward dissensions over certain ordinances of the church.

So much for the two largest denominations in North Carolina. There were also the Quakers, well organized in some of the eastern and at least one of the piedmont counties; but they were a distinct social class rather than an aggressive denomination. The Moravians had a worthy and heroic history, but not until recent years have they sought an increase of membership. The progress of the Lutherans and German Reformed had been seriously checked by the interruption of intercourse with Europe during the war. Most significant was the condition of the Anglicans. Throughout the South the Church of England was prostrate. Among its communicants in North Carolina were a number of revolutionary leaders and its clergy were as a rule true to the patriot cause. But its tradition of close alliance with the British colonial system was a serious hindrance, there was no local episcopate, and early efforts to organize the diocese of North Carolina failed. In strong contrast to this condition of "suspended animation" in the South was the virility of the church in the North. There the support of the colonial government had never been so thorough; yet after the war bishops were elected and consecrated for the states of Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and New York and in 1785 the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church was organized.

Evidently there was an opportunity for a church that had an organization suitable for a distinct propaganda, that was free from doctrinal disputes, and that was thoroughly consecrated to some elemental Christian truth which would appeal to the people. In Methodism the hour and the opportunity met. The line of expansion seems to have been determined in quite a measure by the relative strength of the Anglicans. In 1783 eighty per cent of the Methodist membership was in the South, in 1800 sixty per cent, and in 1810 fifty-seven per cent; in other words, the new denomination took hold most rapidly in that section in which the Church of England was most prostrate.

Let us notice the role of North Carolina in the new movement. The Methodist pioneers made their appearance in

North Carolina in 1772. The prevalent opinion is that the growth of the societies was checked by the Revolution, that many of the British preachers returned to England, and that the native circuit riders were popularly regarded as loyal to the Crown to the injury of their cause. Such a conclusion is not in accord with the facts, so far as North Carolina is concerned. In 1776 the membership of the societies in the State was 683; by 1783, the year of the treaty of peace, it had risen to 2,229, and the number of circuits was then increased from four to ten. A step toward independence from the Church of England was taken in 1779, when the preachers of North Carolina and Virginia appointed a presbytery of three with power to ordain themselves, then others. Through the influence of Francis Asbury this action was disavowed until Mr. Wesley could be consulted. In 1784 consent was given and the Methodist societies took on the clothes of a church at Baltimore. The mechanism of the new denomination was well suited to the task before it. The bishops were the generals, the presiding elders the captains, the circuit riders the soldiers of the line. All were engaged in a spiritual warfare; in contrast to the call of the congregation in the Presbyterian and Baptist polities, they were *sent* to the people. Not since the days of the Jesuit fathers in the French northwest had this country seen such an aggressive projection of the Christian faith; hardly since the days of St. Francis had Christianity known a religious type similar to the circuit rider. Like the friars, he knew no place of abode, parsonages not being authorized until 1800. The meagre salary of sixty-four dollars made poverty truly evangelical and, with the views of Asbury, made marriage practically impossible for the majority. Like the mediaeval saints the circuit riders frequently ministered to the intellectual and physical, as well as to the more spiritual needs of the people. What was the attitude of mind, and what were the methods of work among these *fratres minores* who rode the circuits of North Carolina in the latter part of the eighteenth and the first decade of the nineteenth centuries? Shall we turn to the Journal of Francis Asbury, which mentions North Carolina seventy times? Asbury was the preëminent saint of his age, but he was a man of unusual ability, a high

officer, and the directing genius of the early campaign of the Methodist host. Let us turn in preference to the life and thought of the average circuit riders who never attained commanding prominence, yet performed a service as essential as that of the supreme officers. A few of them kept diaries, which next to prayer are the most intimate expression of the inner life. Some entries made by one who travelled circuits in Virginia and North Carolina from 1788 to 1797 are illuminating for our purpose.

First of all the diarist in question preached at nearly every resting place, holding usually two services. We are safe in estimating for him at least seven services a week, most of which were at private homes. He was never satisfied unless there was at each meeting some manifestation of Grace, either the conversion of the sinner or the rejoicing of the redeemed. To him the devil was a living person with whom he had conflicts as real as those of the early monks. "It was not many moments after," he writes of one meeting, "before I felt as if Hell received a reproof; the Lord Jesus appeared—his beautiful picture, his countenance ravished my heart, his presence made all within me rejoice." So intense was he on victory over Satan that exhaustion sometimes overtook him. "This," he writes, "is something that I cannot account for—when my strength of body fails, it cuts off my ideas short." Often when the diarist grieves that God is not with him, the reader realizes that physical infirmity is the real trouble. Given a few monasteries for occasional retreat, and among the early circuit riders would have arisen a group of religious writers comparable only to Thomas à Kempis, John Tauler, and William Law. Their lives and achievements, if they could be written, would make a veritable *Acta Sanctorum*.

Of particular interest was the diarist's reflections on slavery. At every opportunity he preached to the negroes; often they came in larger numbers by night than the whites by day. Whenever possible he argues with the masters concerning the wrongs of the institution. "If ever I get rich through slavery," he writes, "I shall esteem myself a traitor and claim a part in Hell with Judas, and the rich glutton." Again he says, "While the proud whites live in luxury and abomination making a

mock of God, and his word, the African upholds him by his swet and labor of his willing hands—and if they serve the Lord God it must be in the dead of night when they ought to be taking rest of their bodys. O, blood, blood, how awful it cryes up before God against my poor unjust professing Bro.”

Once he witnessed the realities of oppression. Preaching one day, “the dear black people was filled with the power and spirit of God and began with a great Shout to give glory to God—this vexed the Devil. He entered into the cruel white men with violence who eagerly ran into the church with sticks and clubs and caines—abeating and abusing the poor slaves them outcast of man for praising God . . . a magistrate that has taken the oath was the instigator of it . . . with bitter oaths and gnashing of teeth he put up a prayer that we the preachers was all in Some Miseearable Infernal Place. . . I think if ever I saw happy people it was today under persecution. O the tears, screams, crys and groans for the wicked it was awful. I looked out the window while I stood at the desk and behold; a poor black bro. lucked me in the face, with bursting grief tears of blood, rolling down his bruised face, and cryed this is what I have for praising my dear Jesus. . . It reached my poor heart, I beged him to bare it for Christ Sake, he would soon (if he was faithful) be out of reach of their clubs—O how can I rest when I see my bro unhumanely treated. O America, America; blood and oppression will be thy overthrow.”

For years the diarist presented the cause of Christ with all his strength; then his itinerating days ended in the year 1797, not with death, but matrimony. But the rejoicing of the bridegroom could not be dissociated from some manifestation of Grace. On his wedding night he made this entry:

Monday, June 5. Many are my afflictions but I hope out of them God will deliver me. This blessed night about nine o'clock I was united in wedlock to Miss Polly Seward, daughter of John Seward, of Brunswick, state of Virginia, by the Rev. John Easter. I think God has owned this union which was sealed with the solemn ceremony. Bro. W. Spencer, whom I called Jonathan, was so kind as to give me his company and attendance. We had sweet prayer and thanksgiving together unto the blessed Lord. I thank God we had an answer to prayer. Many shouts were sent up to Heaven. It was a

solemn time with me, may the Lord bless us, and give us the sweet guidance of his Holy Spirit."

James Meacham, from whom I have quoted, was not the only circuit rider in North Carolina.* In 1783 there were on the North Carolina circuits eighteen preachers; by 1800 there were twenty-seven. Co-operating with them were a large number of local preachers, estimated by Jesse Lee in 1800 at 150. The work of the pioneers was not limited to preaching the gospel. They wielded an intellectual influence. Sometime between 1780 and 1790 Cokesbury School was established on the Yadkin, the first preparatory school in America under Methodist control. A few years after the Revolution Sunday schools were introduced for the purpose of instruction in the elementary branches, and the Conference of 1790 declared, "Let us labor, as the heart and soul of one man, to establish Sunday schools in or near the place of public worship. Let persons be appointed by the bishops, elders, deacons or preachers to teach (gratis) all that will attend and have a capacity to learn; from six o'clock in the morning till ten, and from two 'clock in the afternoon till six; where it does not interfere with public worship. The Council shall compile a proper school book, to teach them learning and piety." Just when the Methodist Sunday school appeared in North Carolina and how extensively the institution was used, I have not been able to learn. In Virginia the first Sunday school was organized in 1786, in South Carolina, in 1787. The circuit riders had still another intellectual influence. When the Methodist publishing house was organized they scattered its books and tracts throughout North Carolina. It is a matter of record that the Discipline of 1786 and also the first number of the *Arminian Magazine* were prepared for the press in North Carolina, the former by John Dickins on the Bertie Circuit, the latter by Coke and Asbury in 1789.

Nor were the Presbyterians and Baptists inactive. In 1788 the Synod of the Carolinas was organized, and the Presbyterian divines busied themselves in combating skepticism, restoring Sabbath observance, and holding short seasons of fasting and prayer in their churches twice a year. Long be-

* See *Diary and Travel of James Meacham* in Historical Papers, Series IX and X.

fore the camp meeting came into vogue, tents or stands for use of the minister in out-of-door preaching were common among the Presbyterian congregations. By the Baptists five new associations were organized, three in the west, the Yadkin (1790), Mayo (1798), and Mountain (1799), and two in the east, Tar River (1794), and Flat River (1794). Thus the period from 1783 to 1800 was one of preparation, characterized by a gradual extension of the churches into fields hitherto unoccupied and by denominational reorganization. The result was a rich harvest, ushered in by a great revival which began in 1801 and lasted for a decade. Baptist traditions regard it as a reflex of the great revival contemporary in the west, while good Presbyterian authority claims that it began in Orange County as the result of prayer meetings conducted by the wife of Dr. David Caldwell. With the Methodists the genesis of the revival undoubtedly was the Conference of 1800 which met in Baltimore. It closed with a distinct manifestation of Grace and the preachers carried the flame of evangelism to the most distant circuits. In North Carolina the revival started in the western counties, thence spread to the Cape Fear, then the coast and the Albemarle section, and culminated in a meeting at Raleigh, 1811. Here was a movement of epochal importance in our religious history. Let us notice some of its characteristics.

First of all there was co-operation on the part of the Methodists, the Presbyterians and the Baptists. The means of reaching the people was the camp meeting. Its origin dates from 1789 or 1790, when it was used in the western counties by John McGee and Daniel Asbury, and later was introduced by McGee into Tennessee and Kentucky. With the revival it became the most prominent means of carrying the gospel to the masses. The numbers attending were estimated by the thousands. From all accounts the results were greater in the piedmont than in the Cape Fear section. To a large degree this may be attributed to racial influences. In the western counties the population was largely Scotch-Irish. These people were exiles in a double sense. In the migration from Scotland to Ireland much of the discipline of the kirk was lost. The English Church was established in Ireland and the govern-

ment opposed any other form of Protestantism. Hence under great difficulties did the Presbyterian church in Ireland maintain its existence. Moreover, the early years of the Scotch in Ireland were years of conflict with rugged nature. Cabins were built, fields were cleared in face of opposition by the native Irish and the beasts of the forest. Thus for a time physical wants stood first. These facts, the frontier life and the policy of the English government, were the background for a new kind of religious experience which came about 1625, a wave of revivals conducted by missionaries, not in churches, but in the cabins of the settlers, the first form of prayer meeting. A century later the Scotch-Irish emigrated to America. Again the task of the first years was a conflict with nature, clearing the forest and establishing homes. The outlook for fruitful life was better than in Ireland; the hearts of the people were softened by the greater degree of liberty and old prejudices relaxed. The result was the revival of 1755 in the Piedmont section, led by Strubal Stearns, the Baptist missionary from New England, and the still greater revival of 1801.

On the other hand the experience of the Scotch Highlanders had been different. In Scotland the kirk was established and the chief religious interest was to defend it from criticism by the Anglicans. Hence the Scotch divines excelled in the philosophy of religion, the defense of traditional thought and forms of worship. Consequently neither in Scotland nor among the Scotch in America were Methodism or revivals very popular. Let me illustrate by two Presbyterian clergymen in North Carolina. Dr. David Caldwell, Scotch-Irish minister, educator and politician, welcomed the revival of 1801 as a special manifestation of Grace; likewise one of his congregations, the church at Alamance. Not so another of his congregations, the church at Buffalo. Alamance went so far as to adopt the evangelical hymns of Isaac Watts but Buffalo continued the old custom of singing the psalms. In strong contrast to Dr. Caldwell was Samuel MacCorkle, a Scotch minister. At first he was extremely doubtful of the value of the great wave of evangelism. At Caldwell's special invitation he attended a camp meeting in Randolph County. He was shocked by the scenes. "Is it possible, said I, that this scene

of seeming confusion can come from the spirit of God? Can He who called light from darkness, and order from confusion, educe light and order from such a dark mental and moral chaos?" Toward the close of the meeting, while still in doubt as to the efficacy of the revival, he was called to his own son, who was under conviction of sin. While praying over him the good dominie's interest widened to the whole world of sinners, his doubts of the value of revivals were dispelled, and he himself became active in camp meetings.

What has this attitude of the Presbyterians toward revivals to do with Methodism? Everything; the Calvinistic forces, both Presbyterian and Baptist, were divided as to the value and advisability of this method of propaganda. The Methodists were not divided, their Arminian doctrine made them unanimous, and hence in the end they reaped a greater harvest. By 1810 they had outstripped other denominations in point of numbers.

The phase of the revival that attracted most attention was the physical expression of emotion. Such religious exercises as falling or the jerks, dancing, barking, laughing, and singing were common. Such phenomena had characterized the previous revivals in Ireland and the piedmont section. They were most common among the Scotch-Irish. Most of our accounts are from Presbyterian sources. Typical were the scenes at a camp meeting held in Rutherford County in 1802 by Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists:

There was a powerful work among the people, such as had never been witnessed before in this part of the country. Many were astonished beyond measure, and appeared to be frightened almost to death. They would fall sometimes, under preaching, their whole length on the ground, and with such suddenness and violence as seemed almost enough to kill them. Some of my neighbors fell at my feet like men shot in battle. This the people called being "struck down," and when they professed religion, they called that "coming through."

One of the most mysterious exercises among the people was what was called the jerks. I saw numbers exercised in this way at a camp-meeting held in Lincoln County. Sometimes their heads would be jerked backward and forward with such violence that it would cause them to utter involuntarily a sharp, quick sound similar to the yelp of a dog; and the hair of the women to crack like a whip. Sometimes

their arms, with clenched fists, would be jerked in alternate directions with such force as seemed sufficient almost to separate them from the body. Sometimes all their limbs would be affected, and they would be thrown into almost every imaginable position, and it was as impossible to hold them still almost as to hold a wild horse. When a woman was exercised in this way, other women would join hands around her and keep her within the circle they formed; but the men were left without constraint to jerk at large through the congregation, over benches, over logs, and even over fences. I have seen persons exercised in such a way that they would go all over the floor with a quick, dancing motion, and with such rapidity that their feet would rattle upon the floor like drum-sticks.

Some of the Presbyterians got into some extremes and brought a reproach upon the good work. They got into what they called the dancing exercise, the marrying exercise, etc. Sometimes a whole set of them would get together and begin dancing about at a most extravagant rate. Sometimes they would be exercised about getting married, and one would tell another he or she had a particular revelation that they must be married, and if the one thus addressed did not consent, he or she must expect to be damned. Thus many got married, and it was said some old maids, who had nearly gotten antiquated, managed in this way to get husbands. But this was condemned by the more sober part among Presbyterians and Methodists, and it has now nearly subsided.*

In the light of such scenes it is not strange to hear that Methodist ministers were sometimes arrested or assaulted and that one husband applied a mustard plaster to his wife to cure her of Methodism. Experience with human souls in the camp meeting often brought with it an unusual knowledge of the mind and its operations. Sometimes the circuit riders utilized this knowledge for the cure of mental ailments. An example occurred in Wilmington in 1815. Joseph Travis was pastor of the Methodist Church. Among the residents of the town was an ex-governor of the state. One day he asked Travis to call on his wife who for some time had been treated by physicians for some mental disturbance. Hear 'Travis' account of the interview and its results:

Calling on the lady he found that "her head had been shaved and blistered, and I know not what besides had been tried, to restore her mind to a proper balance. Yet withal, she apparently grew worse. I told her that at the request of her husband, I had called to see her. She immediately commenced relating to me her deplorable insanity, and the cause leading thereunto; namely, a confusion of mind which

* David Gray, quoted from Shipp, *Methodism in South Carolina*, p. 273.

suddenly seized her one day; and withal that her greatest grief was that she was not prepared for death. I endeavored to convince her that she was not deranged, assuring her that a deranged person was not conscious of any aberration of mind. I pretty well convinced her of the fact and then proceeded to point her desponding and sin-smitten soul to the great atonement made for sinners by the death and resurrection of Christ. I conversed with her for a half hour or so, prayed with her, and left her. In a day or two afterwards, a carriage drove up to the parsonage. I stepped out, and who should it be but Mrs. Smith. I helped her out of the carriage and with weeping eyes as she entered the parsonage, she exclaimed, "O Sir! you have done me more good than all the doctors put together. You directed me to Jesus. I went to him by faith, and humble confidence and prayer. He has healed me, soul and body; I feel quite happy.*"

In the eastern counties the outlook for converts to Methodism was different than in the west. There was a large negro population, and the whites were mainly of English rather than Scotch-Irish extraction. In those counties that had a large colored element in their population Methodism seems to have made a stronger appeal to the negroes than the whites. The first white convert in Fayetteville was baptized in 1802 although for some time there had been a large negro congregation, organized by Henry Evans, a free negro preacher. In Wilmington in 1802 the white membership was 48, the negro 231; in 1812 the figures were 94 white and 704 colored. In the Albemarle section the Methodist movement received the cooperation of the Anglicans. For this Reverend Charles Pettigrew was largely responsible. In vain he had labored to organize the surviving elements of the Church of England into a diocese. In fact he was elected Bishop of North Carolina in 1794 but was never consecrated. Realizing the futility of his efforts, he turned to Methodism as the best hope for religion. At his home he entertained the circuit riders, at the chapel on his plantation near Edenton they preached, and until 1839 Pettigrew's Chapel was a regular appointment on the Columbia Circuit.

The culmination of the evangelistic wave was reached in a meeting at Raleigh. There the Virginia Conference met in 1811. Its sessions were held in the State House because the small Methodist congregation had no building. Asbury was

* Autobiography of Joseph Travis, p. 80.

present, so were McKendree, Jesse Lee and other pioneers of Methodism. Guided by their preaching about fifty professed Christ, among whom was William Hill, Secretary of State from 1811 to 1859. The immediate result was the construction of a church, the direct antecedent of Edenton Street. Among the witnesses of the revival was William Glendenning, one of the original Methodist preachers in America. In 1785 he left the new denomination, dissatisfied with its form of government, joined O'Kelly's Republican Methodist Church; by 1811 he had become an Unitarian and pastor of the only church building in Raleigh. He welcomed his old associates and took a keen interest in the revival but frequently exclaimed, "I do not like the government, I do not like the government." It is very significant that the streams of Unitarianism and Methodism should have met in Raleigh. The town was the capital of the state and in political circles there was a well-defined revolt against religious traditions. Now Unitarianism stood for intellectual revolt in religion and Methodism for a moral revolt; both were for their day and time radical movements, directed against a wall of mental and moral conservatism. If the first church in the new capital was Unitarian, the second was Methodist, and the revival stimulated other denominations into life, for in a few years churches were built by Baptists, Presbyterians and the Episcopalians.

No review of the religious movement in North Carolina in the quarter century after the revolution would be complete without some consideration of its influence on the life of the people. Of this it is unfortunately difficult to make an estimate. Most of our church history consists of the biography of clergymen, outlines of theological controversies and the defense of institutions of the church to the neglect of the life and work of the laity. Moreover, as all the churches in North Carolina were growing or making efforts toward better organization of their forces in the period under consideration, it is very difficult to differentiate the religious influence of one denomination from that of another. Truly there is more likeness than dissimilarity among the children of God. Yet with due regard to these difficulties, certain conclusions are warranted.

First of all, the reality of religion was brought home to the people, principally by the revival of 1801. Now the latter half of the eighteenth century was preëminently an age of free thinking. Skepticism was then aggressive, scoffing, irreligious and irreverent, and such it remained until the scientific movement of the nineteenth century gave free thought, sound facts, a method, and a task. Now the skepticism of the older type existed among the intellectual class in North Carolina, and the uncultivated copied their betters and swaggered about unbelief. Churches had not been too numerous either in country or towns, and the cause of religion had not been very extensively or very thoroughly presented prior to the Revolution. The great revival, therefore, marks healthy reaction, an awakening of the people to the reality of the religious element in life. The conversion of the infidel was a common event. Typical is the following account by James Jenkins. Writing in 1802 of a meeting in the Waxhaws he says: "One among many remarkable cases I will relate of a professed atheist who fell to the earth and sent for brother Gassaway to pray for him. After laboring in the pangs of the new birth for some time, the Lord gave him deliverance. He then confessed before hundreds that for some years he had not believed there was a God now found him gracious to his soul." The reaction from infidelity probably explains in some measure the religious exercises and visions, phenomena which do not occur today because the claims of religion are familiar to us from early youth. People in the present generation are not less religious but more normal in the expression of their convictions.

Out of the religious movement came a demand for moral reform. Illustrative was a new attitude toward alcohol. Every gentleman had his private distillery, the leading politician of North Carolina is said to have kept a bucket of corn whiskey at his front door, and the manufacture and peddling of liquors was an industry as common as raising cotton or tobacco. Yet in the Methodist Conference minutes of 1783 we find the following question and answer:

Q.—"Should our friends be permitted to make spirituous liquors, sell, and drink them in drams?"

A.—“By no means; in that it is wrong in its nature and consequences, and desire all our preachers to teach the people by precept and example to put away the evil.”

So far as I have been able to find this is the genesis of the prohibition movement in the South. Later local preachers were prohibited under penalty to distill or retail spirituous liquors. However, the issue was injected into politics by the Baptists when in 1817 the following resolutions were adopted by the Sandy Creek Association:

Whereas, this association views with concern and regret the custom existing among candidates for public posts of honor and profit, of distributing spirituous liquors among the people, in order to enhance their own popularity, and influence the suffrages of their fellow citizens at elections; and whereas such a custom is both ruinous to the morals and happiness of the people, and dangerous to their civil rights and liberties.

1. Resolved unanimously, That a person be appointed to prepare a memorial to be presented to the next meeting of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, praying them to enact a law against this degrading evil.

2. Resolved, That it be recommended to the churches of this association to refuse their support to any candidate who shall, either himself or by another person distribute spirituous liquors with a view to conciliate the affections of the people.

3. Resolved, That this association concur with their brethren of the Flat River Association, in inviting all professing Christians, and lovers of the good order and morality, to lend their decided co-operation to avert the evils which this custom entails upon us.

4. Agreed that Brother George Dismukes wait upon the legislature with the memorial of this body.”

The great revival deeply influenced the various denominations. Increase of membership made possible more compact church organization. In 1803 the Lutheran synod of North Carolina was formed. In 1813 the Presbyterian churches withdrew from the Synod of the Carolinas and organized the Synod of North Carolina. In 1817 the Episcopalians organized the Diocese of North Carolina, with three clergymen and less than 200 laity. John Stark Ravenscroft was elected Bishop and at the end of his episcopate in 1830 there were eleven clergymen and 650 lay members.

Of all churches the Baptist was most profoundly affected. Two issues, the direct result of the revival, convulsed the denomination. One was that of missions. In 1805 the Philanthropic Baptist Missionary Society was organized, the first Baptist society for missions in the United States, followed in 1814 by the North Carolina Baptist Society for Foreign Missions, the former acting through the association, the latter through individuals. In 1817 the contributions of the North Carolina Baptists for missions surpassed those of any other state, except Massachusetts. However the cause of home missions overshadowed that of foreign missions. A second movement was for closer relationship between the associations, resulting in the Baptist General Meeting of Correspondence of 1812. In 1821 the Philanthropic Society and the General Meeting were merged into the North Carolina Baptist Missionary Society, with salaried officers and the purpose of developing systematic benevolence. Undoubtedly the increasing importance of domestic over foreign missions and the attempt at co-operation among the associations were due to competition of the Methodists, who by 1810 had passed the Baptists in numbers. But the movements were bitterly opposed. The spirit of individualism was so strongly rooted that there was fear of any semblance of authority beyond the local church. Moreover, the rigid Calvinistic element criticized the organized propaganda for missions as a diversion from God's plans. Much bitterness was engendered. When the party of progress organized the Baptist State Convention in 1831, three of the older associations repudiated the movement and the spirit of schism split many of the churches.

Nor was the problem of organization confined to the Baptists. Considerable dissatisfaction pervaded the Methodists. In the early days of the church there was discontent with the episcopacy. Joseph Pilmoor, the first Methodist preacher in North Carolina, never left the Church of England. William Meredith, who introduced Methodism into Wilmington, lived and died a Primitive Methodist. Glendenning, as we have seen, became a Unitarian, and Parson Miller, of Rowan County, never left the Church of England; indeed, he helped to establish the Diocese of North Carolina.

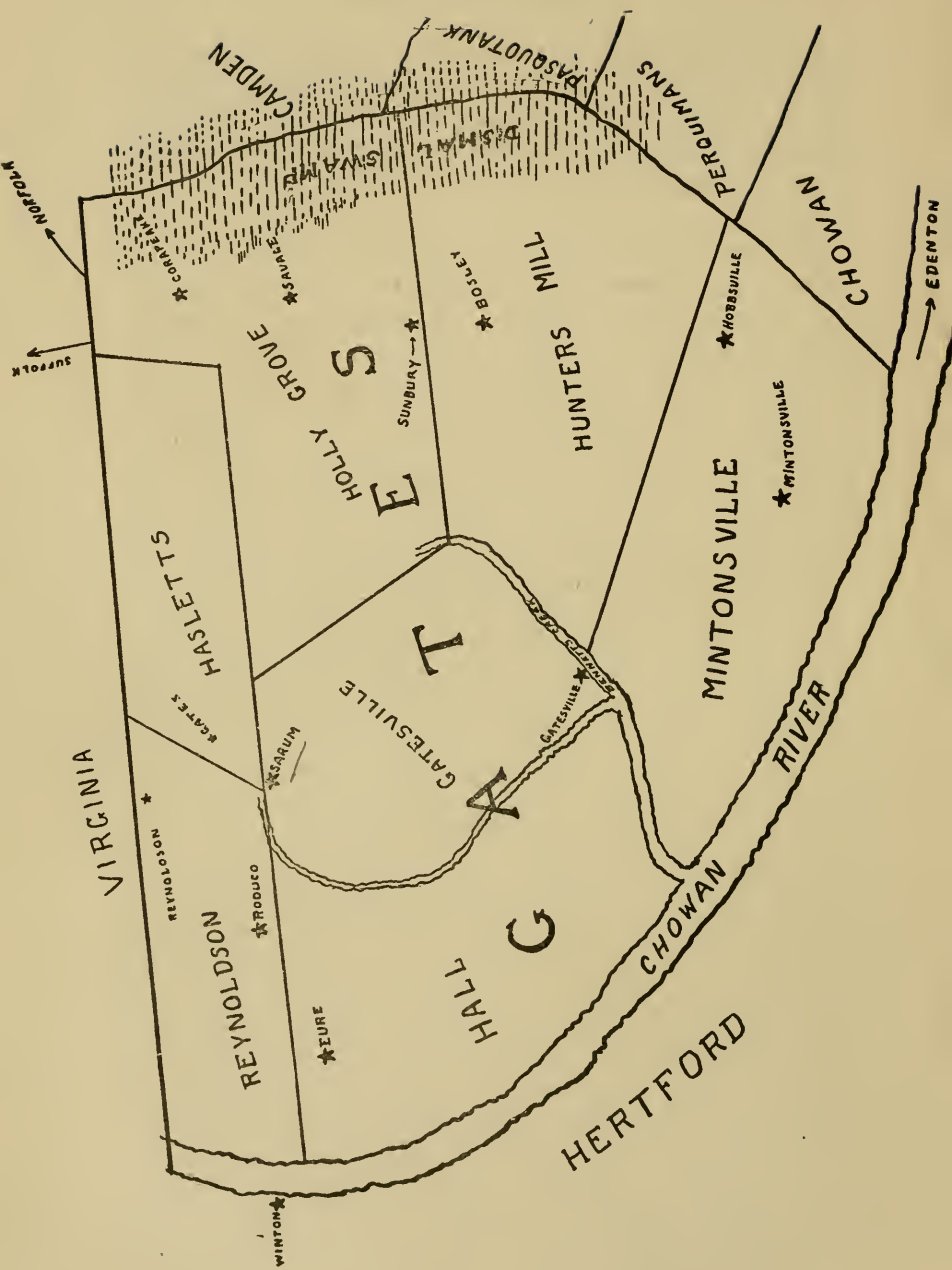
The leader of the earlier discontent was James O'Kelley, a native of Ireland, who spent his later years in Chatham County, North Carolina. When the motion to allow the itinerant to appeal from the Bishop to the Conference in the matter of his appointment was rejected in 1792, O'Kelley withdrew and soon organized the Republican Methodist Church, now the Christian Church. Another period of discontent opened after the great revival. On account of the small salary of the itinerant, there was a host of local preachers who retired from the ranks in order to support their families. They participated in the camp meetings and the revivals, and demanded recognition in the councils of the church. In 1820 the General Conference allowed them to organize district conferences, the chairmen of which were the presiding elders. This concession was not enough; in 1821 the Roanoke District Conference of Local Preachers sent to similar bodies and also to the Virginia Conference a protest against rules for their government made by a general conference in which they were not represented, and a petition for representation was sent up to the General Conference of 1824. From other states were also sent petitions for lay representation. When these were rejected, "union societies" were organized to agitate for reform, the second society in the movement being the Roanoke Union Society, organized in Halifax County, Nov. 3, 1824. A little later the Granville Union was formed on the Tar River Circuit. The policy of the itinerants and presiding elders toward the movement for reform was drastic. Accusing members of the unions of inveighing against the discipline and sowing dissensions, they frequently expelled them from the churches. When a second appeal for reform to the General Conference of 1828 was rejected, a new denomination was launched, the Associated Methodist Churches, later the Methodist Protestant Church; the first annual conference of the new movement was organized in North Carolina in December, 1828.

These revolts were safety valves for discontent. They did not impede the growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church which continued to surpass other denominations in point of numbers. Let us inquire in conclusion if Methodism made

any distinct contribution to religious life and thought in North Carolina. Undoubtedly it did. That contribution did not spring from its superior organization or methods of work but from its doctrine and the attitude of mind arising from it. Of the denominations that made a distinct appeal to the masses, Methodism alone was Arminian, the Baptists and Presbyterians being Calvinistic. The importance of this doctrinal cleavage is realized when we contrast certain by-products. Granted the theory of predestination, it inevitably follows that the elect of God are differentiated from the rest of humanity. Moreover the interests of the elect can not be confined to matters purely spiritual. Their voice should be heard in political and social affairs. It is not strange therefore to find Calvinistic ministers taking a leading part in political conventions, preaching on the merits of the federal constitution, serving in the legislature and the halls of Congress. The Calvinistic congregation was a force to be reckoned with in matters of politics and government. Moreover the elect of God must eat and drink; should they not patronize the merchant of their own denomination? Their children had to be educated; should they not be sent to the school conducted by one of the elect? Calvinism produced a corporate spirit from which sprang a denominational influence in politics and education.

In strong contrast is the by-product of Arminianism. If the will is free to accept Christ, Christians cannot be set apart from the rest of humanity in one group or a number of groups; religious values spring from private judgment, the acceptance of Christ by man, rather than the choice of God manifested through certain ordinances or church membership. The spirit of Methodism is, therefore, individualistic. The corporate spirit is almost entirely lacking, and its chief product is a liberal attitude toward all men. Before the Methodist laymen will patronize the Methodist merchant or the Methodist school, he must be shown that these are just as good as any others that can be found elsewhere. Rarely have the preachers exercised a political influence, as in the case of the Calvinistic clergy. Moreover as salvation is open to all, Methodism may use in carrying out its purposes professors of

Christ of any denomination whatsoever. This liberality toward men and human agencies has been the distinct contribution of Methodism to religious life and thought in North Carolina. May it never diminish but increase in influence as the years go by.



GATES COUNTY TO 1860 *

BY ISAAC S. HARRELL

INTRODUCTION

In the northeastern part of North Carolina, bordering Virginia and about thirty miles as the crows fly from Norfolk, is situated the county of Gates. On the west lies the county of Hertford and the boundary to the south is marked by the historic counties of Chowan and Perquimans. On the east the county is cut off from civilization by the dense Dismal Swamp, which is as rich in fine timbers and wild beasts as the old town of Edenton, in Chowan County, is in tradition and legend. The county thus situated has an area of 356 square miles and in 1910 the Federal Census reported a population of 10,455; with the exception of a few of the more thrifty and enterprising counties of the State, Gates is about the average in size and population and a little behind in industry.¹

The county is dotted over with small swamps and pocosons leading either into the great Dismal Swamp on the east or into Bennett's Creek and thence into the Chowan River to the south. Along these swamps, pocosons and creeks lie some of the rich farming lands characteristic of eastern Carolina; the people have no difficulty in producing a large crop if the season is suitable, but too much rain means disaster. Between the low, marshy lands scattered here and there over the county are sand ridges, and on these ridges it is extremely difficult to make a good crop; if there is too much rain the crop will drown, and a short drought will parch vegetation. The money crops of the county are cotton and peanuts; occasionally some thrifty farmer succeeds in marketing an early crop of Irish potatoes. Corn and other grains are raised for home consumption only. The low fertile lands bordering the swamps are covered with reeds that remain green throughout the year and apparently offer a good opportunity for stock raising; but in summer the flies and mosquitoes make grazing impracticable and in winter a large area of the land is flooded with water. However many of the farmers raise a few hogs for the nearby meat packers

* The following topics are discussed: Early Descriptions, The Negro, Churches, Education, Politics, Economic Conditions.

of Suffolk and Norfolk; but even these have to be kept in a pasture by the farmers who live near the great swamps, in order to protect them from beasts that frequently make raids from their homes in the swamp to nearby ranges.

There are no large landowners in the county; all belong to the small farmer class. The products of the county are not as great as they are in some of the other counties of similar area. In 1910 the farms with their live stock were valued at \$1,330,000 and the products not fed to live stock were valued at \$528,348. There are no manufacturing establishments and no cities. There is only one navigable stream in the county, Bennett's Creek, and this leads through a circuitous route to the Chowan River and the Albemarle Sound. Thus in industrial pursuits Gates falls into the class of the unimportant counties of the state.

The county of Gates was established by the General Assembly in 1788.² The name Gates was chosen in honor of General Gates, who had just triumphed in his famous campaign over General Burgoyne in New York. The law of incorporation reads in part: "Whereas by reason of the width of the Chowan River and the difficulty of passing over the same, especially in boisterous weather, it is extremely inconvenient for the inhabitants of the north-east end of the said river, to attend courts and other public business, as also for the convenience of the inhabitants of the north of Chowan and Perquimans Counties, it is necessary that the same be divided into a distinct and separate county."

After the county was created by the General Assembly, it was laid off into townships. That part which was formerly in Perquimans went to make up Mintonville Township. This township was in the eastern part of the county, and was bordered by the Dismal Swamp. In the northern part of the county, just above Mintonville and bordering the Virginia line, the township known in the early days as Folley and later as Holley Grove, was formed. West of the Folley Township and bordering the Virginia line was Hasletts. Adjoining this township and to the west was Reynoldson Township, or the Brick House as it is designated in the early returns because of the place where the elections were held. This township

was joined on the west by Hertford County. To the south of Reynoldson the township known as Hall was laid off. East of this township and south of Hasletts and Folley Townships was Gatesville. The townships of Gatesville, Reynoldson, Hall and Hasletts were formed from Hertford and Chowan counties and in politics always stood exactly opposed to the township of Mintonville, formed from that part of the county taken from Perquimans. Holley Grove or the Folley Township was formed from parts of Perquimans and part of Chowan and was about evenly divided in local political strife as will be explained later. In the earliest returns that can be obtained (those of 1842) there are returns from Hunter's Mill but in many of the returns that follow there is no mention of this township and whether it was united with other townships for several years and later re-established or whether the returns are lost, cannot be ascertained. This township is situated in the middle of the county between Gatesville and Mintonville and south of Folley Township. The situation of these townships and their political status were important influences in the development of the county.

The history of Gates County is not attractive because of any illustrious achievements within its border; there were no great leaders in state or national politics in the early days who hailed from Gates. It was an inert county from the very beginning; there were no agitations for reform; everyone was satisfied with things as they were.

Hence the value of Gates County history is that it illustrates life in North Carolina under average conditions uninfluenced by the stress of progress or extreme poverty.

EARLY DESCRIPTIONS

In order to understand clearly the social and economic conditions in Gates County, it will be necessary to trace briefly the development of the territory from which the county was formed. The best authority for conditions in the country prior to its formation is notes that are to be gathered from the records of travellers visiting the Albemarle section.

The territory included in Gates County was first settled about 1660. Tradition has it that the first settlement was

made near Corapeake (then Oropeake, an Indian name) about two miles from the Virginia line and in what is now Holley Grove Township. The first record we have of a visit to this section, is that of George Fox, the great Quaker preacher, who visited the country about 1672. He came by way of Summer-ton, Virginia, and proceeded to what is now Gatesville, the county seat of Gates, and reports to have seen only one house during the trip of twelve miles. He describes the country as being very barren, especially on the sand ridges, and the many swamps and marshes made his travel slow. He reports only one house at Bonner's Creek (now Bennett's), the present site of Gatesville. Here he spent the night and made the best he could of the pioneer accommodations and on the next day proceeded down the creek to the Chowan River and thence to Edenton, then the most important place in the Province of Carolina. The tradition has it that the first settlement was at Corapeake, one mile from the Dismal Swamp, and Fox entered the colony ten miles to the west. Probably there were houses in the western part of what is now Gates that he did not see.³

It is evident that settlers came in rapidly after 1705, for in 1711 a visitor reports that a Mr. Mashburn was conducting a school at Sarum and that he had children under him who could read and write. From all indications this school was for the Indians and was supported by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, a society in England organized to establish churches in America. This same place is called Indian Town in 1719 when an Episcopal Chapel, the first in the region, was established there.⁴

When William Byrd surveyed the dividing line between North Carolina and Virginia in 1730, he was in territory that later became Gates County for more than a month, and from his reports one is led to believe that there were a good many inhabitants at that time; he writes that the priest accompanying the expedition married a few people and baptized many children. The impression one gets from reading Byrd's *History of the Dividing Line* is that these early people of the section were very primitive, and for the most part very idle. He records that they had adopted the Indians custom of letting the

women do all the work in the fields while the men sat around and smoked. The people lived in log huts and showed no signs of being discontented with their lot. Their only ambition was not to live in Virginia; to live in North Carolina meant less, and often, no tax.⁵

By 1758 the country was taking forward steps; in that year the first post route in North Carolina was established, running from Suffolk, Virginia, to Edenton, and on to Wilmington. This route passed through Gates and gave the people the opportunity to come in touch with the civilized world. In all probability this route went through Summerton, Sarum, and by Pipkin's Store.* It is true the route through Corpeake and Sunbury was nearer and there was a road running that way, as the accounts of travellers show, but Summerton was quite a trading place and there must have been several houses at Sarum. Also there was a stage coach some twenty years later from Suffolk to Wilmington by way of Sarum, and in all probability the coach line would follow the route of the mail line.⁶

No definite conclusions can be reached through a study of the notes made by those who travelled the country in these early days. Some describe it as barren and destitute, covered with sand hills and swamps; other reports are more favorable. J. F. D. Smythe makes the following entry: "We remained in Edenton only a few days and then persued our journey northward, through a country covered with sand and pines, a country dead flat, infested with swamps, and the land everywhere miserably poor and barren. On the second day after we left Edenton, in North Carolina, we came to a town called Suffolk, in Virginia, having travelled around on the edge of the Great Dismal Swamp the principal part of the journey." Smythe made his tour in 1783.⁷

Some travellers coming before Smythe when the country was in all probability not so well developed, give a different account. About 1760 the young George Washington, who was rising into prominence by virtue of his surveys for the great Fairfax estate, came to the country. His mission was to investigate the possibility of constructing internal waterways

* Until a few years ago there stood in Gates County, at Pipkin's, an old tavern called "Pipkin's Inn" and according to tradition this adds one more to those "infinitesimal" number of places where General Lafayette was entertained.⁸

as to open up the section. This was a business scheme and his observation can be reckoned as based on intense study. He has the following to say of the country that is now Gates County and its probability of betterment: "The Main Swamp of Oro-peake is about one-half onward from this, where stands the widow Norflets, Mi & Luke Sumner's Plantations. This swamp cannot be less than 200 yards across, but does not nevertheless discharge as much water as Cypress Swamp. At the mouth of this swamp is a very large meadow of 2 or 3000 acres, held by Sumner, Widow Norflet, Marmaduke Norflet, Powel and others, and valuable ground it is."⁸

In 1777 Ekannah Watson passed over the same road travelled by Smythe and Washington and he writes: "Proceeding: from Suffolk to Edenton, North Carolina, we passed over a spacious and level road through a pine forest, which, being in this district extended quite across in North Carolina. We travelled near the north border of the Great Dismal Swamp, which at this time was infested by concealed loyalist and runaway slaves, who could not be approached with safety. They often attack travellers and had recently killed a Mr. Williams. We entered North Carolina late in the day, availing ourselves of the hospitality so characteristic of southern manners, and threw ourselves upon the kindness of Mr. Granby,* a wealthy farmer and merchant."⁹

Five years later Watson again came to the same section and this time he found Gates County organized. He has the following to say, which throws a good deal of light on the existing conditions of the time in all of the mediocre communities of the State and of the South: "At Suffolk I had no alternative but to embark in a returning coal-cart, with one miserable horse and a black boy as driver. I embarked this mode of conveyance in order to reach the house of Mr. Granby, a wealthy planter of Gates County where I had been hospitably entertained in '77. I was compelled to travel two hours, in intense darkness, in this Tybun-like style, amid a storm of rain; and I

* This Mr. Granby was one of the most wealthy men in the county and lived about where Sunbury is now located. As was frequently the custom, the place was called after the leading man in the community and thus a place grew up called Granby and can be found on the map by that name. Later it came to be called Sunsbury and then Sunbury. There is an old bridge near Sunbury that retains the name of Granby.¹⁰

arrived dripping wet and bespotted with mud." The writer goes on to say that Granby did not recognize him as his visitor of '77 and wished to turn him out in the rain, but almost by force the traveller went into the house where he found a dancing party. Once in the light Granby recognized the traveller as his visitor of five years back and made profuse apologies.¹¹

Thus from the records of these three men who visited the region that later became Gates county and who passed over the same route, we get an entirely different impression of conditions. It is very evident that the period that had elapsed since Byrd was in the community was one marked by progress. The country was opened, progress was on foot, things went forward by leaps and bounds; in fact all evidence leads to the belief that the period from 1740-1780 was the period in which the country that later became Gates County made great progress. By 1790 the people of the county compared favorably with those that lived in wealthy counties of the state. It was during this period that the log hut was abandoned and a more comfortable structure erected; slavery was introduced; lands were opened up; roads were laid out; churches established—in short it was during this period that the county took on all of those things that go to make up southern culture of the eighteenth century. There were a number of substantial people who were recognized throughout the section, men had begun to build up considerable fortunes, and from all evidence they were intensely interested in local and national issues.

The first Federal Census taken in 1790 shows that the county had a population at that time of 5,372. Of this number 73 were free negroes, 2,219 were slaves and 3,080 were free whites. There were listed 348 families in the county who had slaves and 282 who did not hold slaves. None of the slave-holders were exceedingly wealthy, most owned a few slaves, none a very large number. The outlook for progress was very bright; there was room for active competition, there was no apparent danger of a few men dominating the whole county. The distribution of slaves was as follows:

Families who owned from 1 to 5 slaves.....	205
Families who owned from 5 to 10 slaves.....	69
Families who owned from 10 to 20 slaves.....	53
Families who owned from 20 to 30 slaves.....	14
Families who owned from 30 to 40 slaves.....	7

Apparently there was no family in the county which held over 40 slaves and the seven owners who held over thirty slaves were:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Residence</i>	<i>Number of Slaves</i>
Miles Benton	Wiggins X Roads	40
John Baker	Lower Part of County	32
Josiah Granberry	Sunbury	30
Isaiah Pipkins	Near Reynoldson	34
Thomas Hunter	Near Sunbury	33
Cornud Orin (Orund?)	Near Drumhill	31
William Baker	Below Gatesville	35

From this background it is evident that Gates County came out of the Revolutionary War with as good prospects for development as could be desired. Proportionally she was about as rich as any of the counties except those with the larger towns, such as Chowan, Orange, and New Hanover. The section was having a wave of prosperity and development. In 1790 the Dismal Swamp Canal was chartered and work was soon begun on it; a little time and money would connect the county with this waterway and with Norfolk. However, in spite of these seeming advantages the development of the county from 1790-1860 does not compare favorably with that of other counties in the state. Gates seems to have made few steps forward. The population increased slowly; industries not at all. To account for this stagnation is difficult. It is due to some extent to the failure to build canals, which will be taken up later. Again there was a general depression throughout the extreme eastern counties when the lands to the west were being opened. Many left the county and went to join the rich land-owners and slave-holders in the far south. Those who were the thrifty and the most prosperous,—the Browns, Granberys, Orunds, Carrs, and Beamons—were all led to the south by the allurements of joining the large class of slave-holders. Again those who stayed at home did not conduct their plantations in such a way as to make them profitable.

In investigating the social conditions in the county prior to 1860 the first factor to be considered is the negro—first the free negro, then the slave.

THE NEGRO

In Gates County the negro was never a political problem; there is no evidence of the abolition sentiment being strong enough to feature in politics. The negro, both free and slave, was a problem of social rather than political importance.

The free negroes held a position in Gates County similar to that held by the same class in the mediocre communities throughout the state. They were not sufficient in number to cause any apprehension until the insurrection in Southampton County, Virginia; after that uprising the people were diligent in their watch over both the free negro and the slave. The figures gathered from the census for 1790 to 1860 give the following facts concerning the number of free negroes and slaves¹³

	<i>Free Negroes</i>	<i>Slaves</i>
1790	72.....	2219
1800	82.....	2688
1810	111.....	2790
1820		
1830	327.....	3648
1840	381.....	3647
1850	396.....	3876
1860	361.....	3901

Thus in the early days the number of free negroes in the county was not sufficient to cause any unrest on the part of the people. However as the years advanced the number increased more rapidly than the increase of either the slave or the white population. This increase was due to some extent to the prolific character of the negro race. However there were other factors at work. Many of the whites in the early days freed their slaves, for before the introduction of the cotton gin slavery was not a profitable institution. We find in the will of Joseph Riddick, one of the largest slave owners, provisions for freeing certain of his slaves.¹⁴ Again it is very probable that many of the free negroes came into the county from Virginia, where the free negroes were plentiful; for during that period

that the free negroes fall off there are indictments in the county courts against free negroes coming into the county from other states contrary to the state law. In 1844 fourteen free negroes were indicted by the grand jury of the county for coming in from Virginia without permission.¹⁵ What the court did with these negroes cannot be ascertained but it is reasonably certain that they did not leave the county. The names of those indicted, Collins, Boon, Brown and Copeland, are common to negroes in the county today who boast that they were of free ancestry. In the years from 1810-1830 the free negroes increased rapidly, as will be seen by the preceding table, but after 1840 the free negro population was practically stationary. Evidently the negroes immigrated to the county when the laws respecting free negroes were lax and often not enforced. When the state laws became more strict, especially when the trouble with the negroes in Southampton, Virginia, arose, there was pressure for local enforcement of the law. During the same period the tendency was stronger to free slaves than it was after the cotton gin gave the black an added value. After 1840 the free negroes do not increase; probably some went to the North where they could hold a more commanding position. From 1850 to 1860 there was a slight decrease in the free negro population, as the table shows. It was during the period from 1810-1830, before the people had been awakened to their danger by the insurrection in Virginia, that the free negroes thrived in the county.

Although there are no records of there being any schools for the free negroes in the county, the census of 1850 records over half of the male free negroes as being able to read and write. There are no records of them voting but every tax list carries a number of free black polls. It was the custom to make the negroes pay all the tax that could be extracted from them and even after the disfranchisement of the free negro in 1835 he was required to pay poll tax.¹⁶

The census records all the free negroes in the county as having white blood.¹⁷ Although conditions were not as bad as they were in Hertford, where a large number of negroes were the direct descendants of prominent white men, the relation between the negroes and the whites was by no means to

be commended. It is probable that some of these free negroes with white blood came from other counties and multiplied in Gates; however miscegenation existed to some extent in the county, for there was one prominent citizen, and in all probability more, who kept negro concubines. This man built at his own expense a church for the free negroes; this church was known as New Hope Baptist Church and part of the time had a free negro preacher. The church was built in 1859 and no slaves were admitted; even after the war it would not for a long time admit any negro who had been a slave, the line always being drawn between those "born free and those shot free." A negro by the name of William Reid preached at this church before the war and among its principal members were the Cuffs, Rooks, Boons, and Copelands, all names prominent among the negroes of the county today.¹⁸

It is evident from the foregoing that the policy of the people of the county towards the free negro was comparatively mild. In fact it was so mild in the early period that it was a desirable place for the free negro to live, as immigration to the county bears evidence. The free negroes were comparatively few in number, especially before 1810, and after 1830 they increased very little, and all of them were mulattoes; it is not strange that the policy towards them was lenient.

The people of Gates County were easy-going and never worried, for they did not believe in commercializing life. "Live and be happy" was their motto. The slaves of the county lived in this atmosphere and their treatment was consequently mild. The master was fond of his slave very much as a kind man is fond of a good horse. The environment of the slaves must have been good for the mortality statistics of slaves in 1850 are better than those of the whites.¹⁹ Of course there were some cruel slave-owners and there were some bad slaves; but, if the information of those, both white and black, who remember the ante-bellum days can be relied upon, the slave in Gates County had about as easy a time as a slave could expect. The strongest evidence that can be found to the contrary is the record of a case that reached the Supreme Court in 1843. A slave, Gilbert, was hired to one Parker by Copeland and the day before the slave was to be returned

Parker attempted to punish him. Gilbert ran from Parker, who shot the negro in the back when at a distance of only 10 feet. Only the smallness of the shot saved the negro. Copeland brought suit against Parker for damage done his property, the negro. The Superior Court of Gates County decided that Parker had no right to shoot the slave unless the slave showed resistance and held that the owner should be compensated for any permanent damage done to the slave. Parker appealed to the Supreme Court of the State which affirmed the decision of the lower court. This case shows that the tendency of the county was to protect the slave from mistreatment.²⁰

As has already been stated the slaves were brought into this section between 1730 and 1760 in all probability, for it was during this period that the plantation system developed and the country prospered most. In the early days the number of slaves compared to the number of whites is very favorable, however after 1790 many of the counties in the state took on new life and slave and free negroes increased rapidly. No such conditions prevailed in Gates, as the following table will illustrate:²¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Slaves</i>	<i>Whites</i>
1790	2219.....	3080
1800	2688.....	3111
1810	2790.....	3062
1820		
1830	3648.....	3891
1840	3647.....	4130
1850	3876.....	4159
1860	3901.....	4181

The statistics of 1790 compare well with those of other counties, but Gates was stationary from 1840-1860. In 1790 the slaves were well divided among the people as a preceding table has illustrated; this condition prevailed up to the Civil War. There is only one instance of one master owning as many as one hundred slaves and this was in 1860. His name was Mills Roberts and he lived in Mintonville Township. There were a score who held as many as fifty and half as many held seventy-five.²² On the whole the number of slaves and the number of whites were about equal. In the early period the tendency was for the slaves to increase faster than

the whites, as is shown in the period 1800-1810, when the slave population made a slight increase and the white population a decline; however after that date the white population began to quicken its pace and in 1830 the slave population became stationary.

Where the slave-owners held a great number of slaves, there was always a tendency to have severe laws; the slaves being massed together and there being more danger of discontent and rebellion, it was natural for the laws to be more severe. The farmers of Gates County did not fall into the class of large slave owners, as did the planters of some of the other counties, and this may account to some extent for the laxity of the enforcement of the somewhat lenient state laws. There were some bad slaves, to be sure, and these were dealt with in a high-handed manner when the crime was severe. As an example, a negro named Pete killed a white man in January, 1803. The crime was committed in the morning and before noon he was outlawed by the county government. He was caught about two o'clock of the same afternoon. Five magistrates of the county assembled at Gates Court House, the county seat, the same afternoon gave him a trial and he was sentenced and executed before night.²³ However the slaves were seldom in court and their offences were generally buying or selling some trifle; the laxity of the court indicates their good behavior. The usual punishment for a slave buying or selling except for his master was thirty-nine lashes but this punishment was seldom imposed in Gates, especially during the early days. There are several instances of masters being indicted for allowing slaves to assemble in their kitchens after night, contrary to state law, and these masters were fined. The poor whites were also indicted for selling trifles, usually liquor, to negro slaves and were fined, the slave generally escaping punishment.²⁴

There was only one time in the history of the county when the slaves threatened to cause trouble, after which we find the slave laws were enforced more rigidly and the free negroes were watched more closely. In August, 1831, the slaves led by a free negro preacher, Nat Turner, of Southampton County, Virginia, planned to have a great insurrection and kill off all

the whites. The day was fixed, and the slaves all through the eastern part of Carolina and Virginia were to rise. The leaders got drunk and began the work Sunday before the fixed time but their plan did not succeed. However they succeeded in killing some fifty white people and alarming the entire section of the country before they could be stopped. When the people in Gates heard of the uprising, they left their farms and came to Gatesville, the men to join the militia and the women to be protected. Southampton County was not far away and in Hertford, the adjoining county in North Carolina, an uprising was expected every hour. The people in their distress wrote to the governor for aid. John Pipkins, head of the Gates County militia, wrote as follows:

GATES Co., Augs. 23, 1831.

His Excellency, Montford Stokes,

Dear Sir,

Our defenseless situation impells me at this important crisis, to call on you for some of the public arms to defend our families and our citizens. Not one-half the Regiment under my command is armed. We have just received news from our sister county (Hertford) the important intelligence of an insurrection in the county of South Hampton, Va., and the town of Mufreesboro is hourly expected to be the next scene of bloodshed—The citizens are all in army and all the arms we can raise is now resorted to.

About 200 armed negroes with musketts and bayonetts have made their first attack upon the citizens of South Hampton and have murdered 25 families and they are not as yet arrested in their bloody designs. About 100 stand of arms I think would be a great protection to us—and we need them immediately for our protection.

I am yours with respect,

(Signed) JOHN D. PIPKIN.

However the people were not willing to trust their fate to one letter for they realized the eminent danger and they took pains to bring all possible pressure to bear on the governor. The same day John B. Baker, a man of prominence living in Gatesville, wrote to the governor as follows:

GATES COURT HOUSE, 23rd Augt.

Sir

You, sir, no doubt have been informed that there is a serious insurrection of the negroes in a neighboring County of Va., and the militia are now collecting here—But we have no arms—I had no

notion of so few that can be serviceable being in the hands of our regiment; we have, as far as ascertained, not arms for one-third of the men. This is a wretched situation to be placed in, when all are alarmed, and I fear the most serious consequences if the danger should approach nearer to us.

I am induced to make this statement to you to aid the statement of our Col., with whom you are not acquainted. If sir, you can do so, send us arms as soon as possible. One-hundred stands would place us probably out of danger.

I do not send you the reports from Va. as no doubt you will have received them before this reaches you. They are more alarming than the report of any previous insurrection that I have any knowledge of.

Yours most obediently,

(Signed) JOHN B. BAKER.

These two letters show something of the distress caused in the county by the insurrection in Southampton. There are no reports of any trouble with the negroes in the county trying to rebel. The troops rapidly assembled and in a few days the matter was over. But the people never forgot the uprising; it made a lasting impression upon them of the constant danger of the negro. Perhaps this has much to do with the more stringent enforcement of the slave laws of the state. Although there were no ordinances on slavery passed by the county court after the insurrection, there was certainly a more rigid enforcement of the laws passed by the state. Gates County raised troops to send to help out the inhabitants of Southampton and the legislature passed an act allowing the county and also Hertford to levy a tax to pay the expenses of mobilization of troops. The state also passed an act in 1833 providing for the more stringent enforcement of the patrol laws in Gates County.²⁶ This law provided that the patrolmen should be paid, and provided for a tax to be levied on black polls to raise the necessary amount. No man could serve as a patrolman, except in case of an uprising, who did not own slaves. These measures were characteristic of the time and denote a feeling of unrest among the people over the negro question.

Prior to these measures there is only one law to be found relating to the negro in the county. This was passed by the county court in 1808. At the February term of the Court of Pleas and Quarterly Sessions an ordinance was adopted providing for patrolmen to keep the property around the Court

House free from persons of color. This rule was made to keep away the free negroes who made it a practice to hang around while the court was in session. The ordinance also declared that any person who found such a negro between Bennett's Creek and David Southall's and brought him before the Court would be given a reward. This ordinance was undoubtedly directed against the free negro, but it tends to illustrate the attitude of the county toward the negro; if the negro would keep out of the way the white man did not molest him.⁹³

These measures in the county were necessary to preserve slavery as an institution and were not unjustly severe. In the later days of slavery, slaves were tried in the same courts that white people were tried in. The attitude towards the negro was as lenient as could be expected.

EDUCATION

There is little material dealing with the schools in Gates, and from the sources that are available it seems evident that education played an insignificant part in the early days. As has already been intimated, a traveller reports a school at Sarum about 1710, but this school was supported by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and was for the Indians.²⁷ It is very probable that the people in Gates who gave their sons and daughters an education patronized schools out of the county. There was a good academy at Edenton, and very likely many attended schools in Virginia.

The first mention of a public school in Gates County is a provision in the will of Miles Benton. This will was filed in the court house in Gatesville November 3, 1805. It reads in part as follows: "It is my will and desire that my land and plantation I purchased of Luke Sumner be sold by my executors on a credit of twelve months and the money arising therefrom to be let at interest and the interest arising from the principal to be applied to the building of a schoolhouse and hiring a teacher for the purpose of a free school and that schoolhouse be built within two miles of the places where I now reside and all the children within four miles of my place of residence be permitted to be taught in said school. It is my desire that the court appoint commissioners to superintend said free school

from year to year during time.”²⁸ The brother of Miles Benton, John T. Benton, brought suit and the lands set aside by Miles Benton were lost by litigation and the school was never established. Although no evidence can be found to directly substantiate the fact, it is very probable that there were schools of some kind in the county before Benton provided for this public school; for when Francis Asbury came to the county, he once remarks that Mrs. Bakers’ son, Marmaduke, was “to have gone this day to finish his education at Princeton.”²⁹

In 1820 the first academy in the county was chartered. It was known as the Spring Hill Academy, located at Sarum, now Buckland. This was the place at which Mr. Mashburn ran his Indian School in colonial days. The progress of this school, its course of study and teachers, are unknown. All that can be gathered is from the statute of incorporation and from the recollections of some former students. The charter of 1820 was made to Willis Cowper, Richard B. Gregory, Henry Pugh, and John B. Baker. They were made a body corporate who could sue and be sued, hold and dispose of property, and make such rules and fill such vacancies as they deemed to the best interest of the school.³⁰ Some elderly people say they attended this school just before the civil war and that a “goodly number” of people in the county sent their children to it.³¹

The next academy to be chartered was the one at Sunbury. In 1832 the Legislature passed an act “To incorporate the Sunbury Academy in the County of Gates.” This charter was made to John C. Gorden, Joseph Gorden, Richard H. Parker, Henry Costin, Willis Riddick, Wells Cowper, Isaac R. Hunter, Edward K. Hunter, John Gatling, James Costin, Thomas Twim, Noah Harrell, Tillery W. Carr, and George Costin. This body was given the same powers that were given the incorporators of Spring Hill Academy. The academy was located at Sunbury and was at first opened to both boys and girls. This plan did not work very well and in about seven years the academy was closed and a separate school was opened under private control. This institution had a select boarding school located in the yard of the George Costen place, Sunbury, open only to girls. There were three teachers and a

music teacher. Two pianos were used in the music department; a course was given in French and other subjects characteristic of the select boarding schools were taught. Girls came to this school from adjoining counties and at one time the boarding pupils were nearly a score in number. In connection with this school for girls and under practically the same management, was a school for boys at the home of Mr. Gorden, about a mile and a half away. No girls were allowed to attend this school. The school at Gorden's was placed under the care of Mr. Kellogg, a graduate of Yale, and the select boarding school for girls was under the care of a lady from New England. Both of these schools were controlled by practically the same body of men that chartered the Academy.³²

The same year the Sunbury Academy was incorporated, an academy was chartered at Gatesville. The charter was made to Thomas Saunders, Henry Gilliam, William G. Daugherty, Jephtha Fowlker and William E. Pugh. This charter embodied the same powers that the previous charters granted in the county embodied. The academy was located at Gatesville and was known as the Gatesville Academy.³³

These academies no doubt served well the needs of the more wealthy citizens of the county. There are many old people in the county who can point out the places where these academies stood and name a number of the teachers. All of these schools were private and tuition was charged those attending. However there are no records of there being any free or common schools until the proceeds of the Literary Fund were distributed among the counties for the purpose of education in 1840. The census of 1840 records that there were at that time five common schools in the county. These five common schools were attended by one hundred and twenty-five pupils. For the same year only one academy is listed and this had forty-eight pupils.³⁴ It is impossible to tell whether the other academies had surrendered to the common schools or whether for some reason or other they failed to be listed.

Under the system established by the Literary Fund, a county received from the state two dollars for every dollar that was raised for education in the county. Education took on life and the best schools the county had until Charles B.

Aycock awoke the state to its great need, were maintained from 1840-1860. The census reports that in 1850 there were twelve common schools and twelve teachers and these schools had an enrollment of 520 pupils. Over \$1,000 was spent in the county for education during the year. The same census reports that there were ten academies with a total enrollment of 210 pupils. These academies had an income from students of \$3,052 and were not endowed.³⁵ In 1859 the Board of Education in the county, through its chairman, S. W. Worrell, reported that there were twelve schools in the county and twelve teachers; only two teachers were women. There were 308 boys out of a possible 835 attending school and 258 girls out of a possible 744. The length of the school term for the year was seven months, the highest in the state with the exception of Halifax County, which also had seven months. During the year there was \$2,679.85 in the hands of the chairman.³⁶ The records of the Literary Fund show that from 1841 to 1860 the annual appropriation for education in the county ranged from \$556.00 to \$1,790.00 contributed by the state, and one-half as much contributed by the county.³⁷

The next and the last educational move in the county before the war was the establishment of the Reynoldson Academy. The charter for this academy was granted in 1850 to the Baptist churches of the Chowan Association. This association had established a school for girls at Murfreesboro in 1848; many men from Gates had been instrumental in aiding the school for girls and now demanded that the school for boys be located in Gates. The object of the proposed academy was to prepare the boys of the community for entrance to Wake Forest College. In 1853 John W. Willey, Dr. W. H. Lee, J. D. Goodman, Edward Howell, R. L. Land, and E. B. D. Howell were appointed to select a suitable place and supervise the construction of the academy. The summit of the rising ground in front of Piney Grove Baptist Church, Reynoldson or Brick House Township, Gates County, was selected. The name Reynoldson was given the school to express the love and esteem held for a Baptist minister whose work in the Association had been praiseworthy.

"Soon a large, commodious and handsome building was

erected, nicely finished, and furnished with more than the usual academic outfit. A small, but choice selection of chemical and philosophical apparatus was secured at a cost of \$600. A large, convenient and comfortable hotel was built and furnished for the accommodation of the teachers and pupils. It was not long before a store was opened and a post office." Reynoldson was one of the best schools in the entire section and its boarding attendance was encouraging. Some of the students came from Virginia, many from adjoining counties. The place selected had many good qualities; it was quiet, not half dozen houses within a mile, "a cool spring of water and a Baptist church within sight of the location."

The school was opened in 1855 under the auspices of James K. Delke, a graduate of the University of North Carolina. Charles Rawls, of Nansemond County, Virginia, was assistant. The next year George Morgan of Gates County, was added to the force of teachers. The school was a success and many wanted to turn it into a college. A committee was appointed to investigate the matter but it advised against such action. From the wording of their report there must have been considerable feeling over the matter throughout the Association. In 1857 the Principal had trouble with the boarding department. Investigation was made of the condition of the school and a debt of \$2,500 was reported. As a remedy the board decided to change the teaching force and Boushall, of Camden County, and Ellis, of Wilmington, N. C., were elected joint principals. Together they ran the school successfully until 1861 when Ellis left and James Taylor, of Gates County, a graduate of Wake Forest, became associated with Boushall. Soon it was closed for both teachers and pupils were called to take their places at the front. The record of the school was good, the situation was desirable. In 1856 the legislature passed an act forbidding liquor being sold within two miles of the school grounds;³⁸ the attendance was large and there are many men in the county today who received their education at the Reynoldson Military Institute.³⁹

From the study of available sources the conclusion must necessarily be drawn that in the early days of the county the people contributed little time and less money to the education

of their children. If the child received a fair education before 1820, he must leave the county; and if he was educated in one of the academies established during the period that followed, he must pay tuition. Some of the children attended schools out of the county, such as the son of Widow Baker, already referred to, but the great majority before 1820, from all evidence, never had the advantage of even a common school education. The period of the academies, 1820-1840, did not better the condition very much, for most of the teachers were brought from other states and the tuition had to be made so high to pay them that only the children of the more wealthy could afford to attend. However with the establishment of schools by the Literary Fund the county took a new interest in education. Free schools were established throughout the county and all who wished to could attend a seven months school without paying any tuition. Then there were the academies that the children of the more wealthy could attend. This system of education was brought to an end by the Civil War; for several decades the people grew up in ignorance partly because they were lazy and partly because they could do no better. It took Aycock to re-awaken the people to their duty to child and state.

THE CHURCHES

During the colonial period the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was interested in establishing churches in America. This society was active in the Albemarle section and with the aid of the vestry in Edenton it succeeded in establishing churches in several of the eastern counties. The first of these churches to be established in Gates County was at Indian Town (Sarum) which was directed, in 1719, to be built at a cost not to exceed \$150.⁴⁰ This church was active, as were the other chapels of the Church of England, until about fifteen years before the Revolutionary War. In 1720 Mr. Paul Phillips was lay reader at the chapel; in 1723 Rev. Thomas Newman was paid for holding twenty services a year. In 1724 Mr. Thomas Rountree was reader at the place near Mr. Abraham Hill's, the location of which is not known. In 1732 Mr. John Champion was paid £15 for shingling the chapel near Indian

Town and in 1738 he repaired the church again and the vestry met there.⁴¹

The next year it was ordered by the vestry that two chapels be built, each thirty-five feet long, twenty-two and one-half feet wide and a pitch of eleven feet; one was to be erected at James Costen's (near Sunbury), and one at James Bradley's (location unknown). The one ordered to be built at Sunbury was erected, and the people used it under the auspices of the established church until a few years before the Revolution. The Hunters, Costens, and Gordons, were the leading families in this church. The other chapel that was ordered to be built was probably never constructed, for no trace of a chapel near James Bradley's can be found. However this chapel may have been the one erected the next year by a man named Parker and known as the Knotty Pine Chapel. This chapel was erected at a cost of forty-two pounds and ten shillings and was located six miles from Gatesville. On the contrary we find that in 1744 Mr. Henry Baker gave one acre of land and the timber to build a chapel on the Knotty Pine Swamp and he was given the privilege to build a pew in any part of the church he pleased.⁴² These churches may have been the same, or perhaps there were two chapels near Gatesville.

Besides these records we find that there were several other chapels in the county before the Revolutionary War. In 1744 it was ordered that the old chapel near Sandy Pine* be sold and a new one built at Tottering Bridge and that Thomas Hunter and Richard Bond attend to the matter. The old chapel was sold for \$95. Again there was a chapel in the county known as Farlee's Chapel; this chapel was doubtless somewhere near Sunbury (possibly at the Folley) for we find that Mr. Abraham Norfleet, who lived at Sunbury, was lay reader at the chapel in 1754.⁴³

These churches no doubt were well supported by the people as is shown by the rapid increase in number and by the constant repairing and enlargement. In 1757 Mr. Elisha Hunter was appointed to repair and tar the three chapels, Constance's (at Sunbury), Farlee's and Knotty Pine, and cause glass win-

* This was probably Sandy Cross for we find that there was a chapel here and Joseph Reddick was one of the leaders.

dows and sashes to be fixed in each. The church wardens were ordered to provide for the three chapels three quart-tankards, three pewter pint cups or cans, three table cloths and three napkins. Thus it is certain that these churches had good attention and the men who served them were of a high type. Mr. Gordon, who came over from England as a missionary, was especially commended for his clean life. The same rector that served the people in Edenton generally preached at Farlee's, Constance's and Knotty Pine. "In 1747 Rev. Clement Hall was ordered to preach at Constance's Chapel from Lady Day to Michaelmas and on ye Saturday at ye house of Mr. James Farlee."⁴⁴ Again in 1754 Rev. Mr. Hall, the first man in North Carolina to write a book, officiated twenty-one Sundays at Farlee's, Sarum (Indian Town), and Constance's, and the remainder of the time at Edenton. These records all go to show that the religious condition of the country where Gates County is now situated was good before the Revolution. The church wardens that had charge of the church were not only officers of the church but they were primarily civil officers. These churches were attended by the most wealthy men in the section. Josiah Granberry, Timothy Walton, Richard Bond, Jethro Benton, Luke Sumner, and Elisha Hunter were all leaders in the church at Sunbury.⁴⁴ It is certain that some of the men named above were most active in the movement for independence. The Sumner named above was of the same family as General Jethro Sumner, the Revolutionary hero; and Luke Sumner was himself a member of the Committee of Safety of the Edenton district.

For over thirty years after 1775 there is no record of a church in the proper sense existing in the county. There were societies, it is true, and there were some few persons who met for religious purposes but there was no church with a building and a preacher until the establishment of the Middle Swamp Baptist Church in 1806. The absence of churches immediately after the Revolutionary War does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in spiritual things. It is true that religious enthusiasm did not run as high during this period as it did for several years after the great revivals that took place from 1800 to 1830; however there was some interest as is shown by

the continual visits of such men as Asbury and Burkett. The aid that the English societies had given to the Established Church was withdrawn and it threw the religious steering gear out of place. The people were at a loss as to how to proceed; the entire church policy had always been shaped by the royal government. Doubtless the people accepted religion more as a social policy than as a means to salvation. However people were not enough interested in religious questions to erect churches and ask for ministers. Those who attended services at all went to the churches on the border of the Virginia-Carolina line. There was a church at Summerton, a church at Cypress, and probably other churches for those who were disposed to attend. No doubt these churches along the line hindered religious progress in the county. Those who were wealthy and able to erect churches went to these border churches and were somewhat slow in aiding churches in their immediate vicinity.

When churches were finally established in the county, it is a notable fact that they were almost invariably erected where the old established churches of the pre-Revolutionary period had stood, and in several instances the old buildings were used.

THE BAPTISTS

The first church to be established in the county after the Revolution was the Middle Swamp Baptist Church. This church was one of the eighteen churches that went to make up the Chowan Association which was formed in 1806. Most of the churches that constituted the new association had been members of the Kehukee Association. These churches withdrew from the old association when the general division of the Baptist Church over the question of paid clergy and education came up. There is no record of Middle Swamp ever being a member of the Kehukee Association and in all probability it was formed about the same time these other churches withdrew and formed the Chowan Association. This first church cast its lot as favoring education by the church and in favor of paying its clergy. The other churches of the county that were organized at later dates were influenced by this church and they, too, went with the Missionary Baptists.⁴⁵

In 1776 the Western Branch Baptist Church was constituted in Nansemond County, Virginia, and five years later the Ballard Bridge Church in Chowan County, North Carolina, was organized. These two churches were close together for churches in those days and they were often served by the same minister. In going from one of the churches to the other the road lay through Gates County and by the place where the present Middle Swamp Baptist Church stands. The ministers in going from one church to another, especially Lemuel Burkett, often spent the night and held prayer-meetings in the neighborhood of the present church. These prayer-meetings were held in the homes of James Pruden, Micajah Riddick, Mrs. Granberry, Lewis Walters, and Abram Morgan, and it was out of these little meetings that the first Baptist Church in the county sprang.⁴⁶

The first building was a log house built across the road from the present church. It was from all descriptions an unimposing structure with mud between the logs to keep the wind away. Soon this became inadequate to accommodate the growing congregation and a frame building was erected on the same side of the road on which the present building stands. Later this was torn away and another larger and more imposing building was erected, mainly through the activity of Mr. Willie Riddick. In 1874 a fourth structure, and a few years ago the present and fifth building, were erected. Such has been the growth of this church founded by those old preachers of another century. It is said that one of the new churches was to have a stove, something novel, as the old custom had been to have no fire in the church. Many of the old people objected to this worldly feature. They did not think a church was the proper place for a stove and for a time it brought on a feeling that threatened to destroy the brotherly sentiment in the church. It was only by wise leadership and cautious movements that the congregation was kept together.⁴⁷

All of these early churches had negro as well as white members. After the Civil War the Middle Swamp Colored Baptist Church was organized and the colored members went to that church.

There were no more Baptist churches in the county until

the organization of Piney Grove Church at Reynoldson in 1827. Why a church was located at this place, it is hard to determine. There is no record of any Baptist families being especially active in this locality and it does not offer a very imposing place for a church. However the church seemed to thrive and was always in good standing. This church was founded by John Harrell, an elder in the Middle Swamp Church, with the assistance of Elders Delke, Daniels, and Rice. Then there was Cool Springs (below Gatesville) and Sandy Cross churches organized in 1828. The church at Sandy Cross was strong in its membership in the early days. It was located in the midst of a Democratic stronghold and Joseph Riddick and Whit Stallings were both members of the church. The services were first conducted in the old Episcopal chapel located in the community and later a new church was erected. Elder Q. H. Trotman, a native of Perquimans County and a member of the board of trustees of Wake Forest College, was the most influential man in the church for many years. He was very popular and it is told that the section offered to give him strong support if he would run for Congress, but he declined on account of his ministerial duties. He was pastor of this church for twenty-eight years.⁴⁸

What Nathaniel Pruden was to Middle Swamp and John Harrell to Piney Grove, Shadrach W. Worrell was to the Gatesville Church. He moved to Gatesville about 1837 and was chiefly instrumental in organizing a Baptist Church and building a house of worship in that place. The church was constituted in 1854 and admitted into the Chowan Association in 1855. While in Gatesville, Worrell also served as pastor of Cool Springs and Middle Swamp churches. After the war he went to Baltimore where he was unsuccessful as a commission merchant, editor and broker. The last days of his life were spent in poverty.⁴⁹

In addition to these five churches there was a congregation at Watery Swamp, admitted into the Chowan Baptist Association in 1851. This church, from all evidences did not prosper, for we find that it made no report to the Association after 1857 and was consequently dropped.

These Baptist churches have been instruments for good

in the county. Always aggressive, they have contributed much to the Baptist Association. They have sent out fully fifteen ministers and many of the members have been patrons of Wake Forest College. Through their efforts at Reynoldson they gave the people the best school in the county and made it possible for many of the present citizens to secure an education.

THE METHODISTS

The first record of a Methodist sermon being preached in Gates County is recorded in Asbury's Journal, Saturday, December 17, 1785. Asbury records that he preached at Brother Reddick's in Gates County, North Carolina. Evidently Asbury had been in the county before, for he speaks familiarly of the people. He also records having preached at Cypress Chapel several times before this record of his preaching at "Brother Reddick's." It was at Cypress Chapel that he met for the first time James O'Kelly who later withdrew from the Methodist and formed the Christian Church.

Asbury was in the county again in 1787 and preached at Knotty Pine, an old Episcopal chapel built near Sarum during the colonial period. He preached here Sunday, February 11, 1787, and reports that he had a large congregation and an "open time." Although this is the first account in the journal of his being at Knotty Pine it is probable that he had been there before, for he speaks of there being "quite a little revival."⁵⁰

It will be needless to give an account of all the visits of Asbury to the county. His first visit was in 1785 and the last one is recorded in 1810. During this time he came to the county no less than thirteen times to preach. Doubtless he made other visits that are not recorded in his journal, which became rather sparing in the later years of his ministerial work. The preaching was done in the old Episcopal chapels or in the house of some friend. He visited the home of one Mr. Baker, who lived below Gatesville, on nearly all of his trips. This Mr. Baker was probably the son of Lawrence Baker, a wealthy citizen of the colonial period. Asbury indicates that the Baker's were people of some means, for he once notes that they had just built a new house and again he arrived just as their son, Marmaduke, who was to have "gone this day to

finish his education at Princeton," died. This man is also referred to once as Colonel Baker.

During the first visits Asbury made it a point to preach at Knotty Pine but after 1801 he preached at Gates Court House instead. Baker lived near Kotty Pine but even after Asbury stopped his ministry there he never failed to visit the Bakers on his trips through the county. When he went to Gatesville (or Gates Court House as it was then called), he often stopped at Daniel Southall's and sometimes preached at his house; sometimes he preached at the Court House that stood on the lot in front of the present court house. On Thursday, March 10, 1803, he ordained B. Harrall to the deacon's office. "He is a man of good repute, without slaves."

Asbury visited Sunbury at least twice and preached in Constance's Chapel or the house of Isaac Hunter, his journal does not make it definite which. Monday, March 11, 1799, he says: "We rode to Constant's chapel, on one of the branches of Bennett's Creek. . . . I was made very comfortable in in soul and body at Isaac Hunter's; and had a happy meeting with the poor Africans at night." Asbury's efforts must not have been of much avail at Sunbury for two years later he says: "We went forward to Isaac Hunter's, twelve miles. Alas for this place! Five souls of the white—some poor Africans are seeking the Lord."

Asbury was the man who planted Methodism in Gates County. He came and labored among the people; he was in the county at least thirteen times and probably more, during his labors. The conditions were not always encouraging to him; sometimes he says the people are wicked and would not listen to him and declares he will never come to them again. At other times he finds that they give him a warm welcome and come out in great numbers to hear him preach. The first Methodist Church in the county was erected in 1812 and we have no record of Asbury being in the county after 1810. However he may have preached in this church for he was certainly in Norfolk and Suffolk several times after 1812.*

* Asbury's Journals contain the following references to being in the county:

Jan. 1, 1783, (Vol. 1, p. 455);
Saturday, December 17, 1785, preached at "Brother Riddick's" (Vol. I, p. 503);

During these visits of Asbury no churches were built and no regular organization was perfected. However Methodism was being established. At the various places where the Bishop preached societies were organized and services were held. There is no specific reference to any of these organizations in Asbury's Journal, but reliable tradition says that as early as 1800 there was a society in the neighborhood of what is now Parker's Church, and that the society met at the home of Thomas Parker. Tradition also has it that Asbury preached at this home. Again we find that Mrs. Baker, who lived near Knotty Pine and of whom Asbury spoke so often during his visits to the county, wrote to Asbury concerning the condition of the Society in her neighborhood. It is from such societies as these that Methodist churches in Gates County sprang. In all of the early records of the churches we find that the first members were listed as becoming Methodist long before the churches were established in the community. On the roll of Kittrell's Church, Milly Williams's name heads the list and the year 1781 is given as the time when she became a Methodist, and the church was not organized until 1827. Sarah Harrell's name heads the list at Gatesville and the date of her becoming a Methodist is stated as 1801. These people no doubt were received into the societies organized by Asbury; when these societies became sufficiently strong, churches were built and a definite organization was made.⁵¹

The first Methodist church in the county was Savage's. This church dates back to 1811. The deed for the church property is dated November 21, 1812, and is made by John

Sunday, February 11, 1787, preached at Knotty Pine (Vol. II, p. 6);
Monday, February 28, 1788, preached at Knotty Pine (Vol. II, p. 25);
Tuesday, January 11, 1791, "Brother Baker's" (Vol. II, p. 105);
Friday, January 27, 1792, records being in Gates County (Vol. II, p. 14);
Friday and Saturday, December 2 and 3, records being in Gates and at the house of Colonel Baker (Vol. II, p. 323);
Friday to Monday, March 8-11, in Gates and at Knotty Pine, Gates Court-house and Constant's Chapel (Vol. II, p. 407);
Wednesday, March 18, 1801, at Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 15);
Friday, March 20, 1801, at Isaac Hunter's (Vol. III, p. 15);
Thursday, April 2, 1801, Knotty Pine (Vol. III, p. 18);
Thursday, March 10, 1803, Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 106);
Friday, March 9, 1804, at Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 148);
Tuesday, February 4, 1806, Knotty Pine (Vol. III, p. 215);
Thursday, February 6, 1806, Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 215);
Friday, January 19, 1810, Knotty Pine and Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 329);
Monday, January 22, 1810, records being in Gates County (Vol. III, p. 329).

Savage to Jonathan Williams, Jessie Savage, and John Oden, trustees.⁵² The old church stood about where the present structure is and the old building was repaired several times before the erection of the modern one in 1907. The society that built the first church supposedly grew out of a society organized and frequently visited by Asbury at one Deacon Hasletts, near Summerton.

The next church to be organized in the county was Parker's. This church grew out of a society that tradition says was organized and visited by Asbury (there is no record of it in his journals) at Wiggins X Roads. Later the society met at the home of Thomas Parker about one mile from the location of the present Parker's Church. Nothing definite is known of this society but it is evident that it was organized as early as 1800. In 1813 this same Thomas Parker gave the land on which the church was built. This church has had four buildings.*

The church at Sunbury (Philadelphia) and the one at Gatesville grew out of the old chapels that had been erected in the colonial days, just as the Baptist church at Sandy Cross grew out of an old chapel. When Asbury visited the county, he preached at these chapels. It was natural for the people to come to the same place to worship that they had come to as little children forty years back. We find that Isaac Hunter's name heads the list of Philadelphia. It is also noteworthy that one Isaac Hunter was very prominent in the old Constant's Chapel under the colonial rule. When at Constant's, in 1801, Asbury preached to the negroes and from the remarks in his journal he had more hope for these black souls than he did for the white people of the community.⁵³ During his visit in Gatesville in 1803, Asbury ordained one R. Harrell as a deacon and doubtless this man played a prominent part in the development of Methodism in that section of the county. The first church at Sunbury was erected sometime after 1815; the date of the appointment of trustees is thus dated but no record of a building or a deed can be obtained. The Gatesville church was built about 1828. Jesse Brown, Reuben Harrell and

* This is secured from local tradition and cannot be relied upon altogether. However with the aid of the church records beginning some years later and an occasional deed the facts are to be relied upon as stated fairly accurately.

Thomas Wright Hayes were its founders. Of these churches, as of the others, little is known.

Of the remaining four Methodist churches organized before 1860, still less is known. Kittrells was organized in 1827 through the efforts of George Kittrell, a local preacher. There was a quarrel in Savage Church and the dissenting element withdrew and formed Kittrells, two miles away. It was at this church that Henry Willey, the most prominent Whig of the county, held his membership. Allied with him were the Crosses, Williams, Parkers, and Kittrells.⁵⁴ It is evident from the names on the roll of those who went to make up this membership that the church was strong, not so much in number as in personnel. The people in this community were building a new church when the war came on and it was decided best to put off construction until after the cessation of hostilities. Then there is Zion's church which was built in 1820. The church grew out of protracted services that were held under an arbor not far from the location of the present church. The deed for the church property was made October 6, 1819, by Samuel Brown and his wife, Sarah Brown, to Timothy Walton, Jonathan Lassiter, Samuel Brown, John B. Walton, John Walton, Richard Bond and John Davis, trustees.⁵⁵

Fletcher's Chapel and Harrell's church were both organized before 1860. The date of Fletcher's is 1849 and the man most instrumental in its construction was Asa Hofter; nothing more is known of its early history.⁵⁶ As to Harrell's nothing is known. It is probable one of the oldest churches in the county, for Asbury was in close touch with the people in this section during his visits in the county.

Gates was first reported in the conference minutes in 1821. By this time the churches in the county were certainly as many as four and perhaps five. They were considered worthy of recognition and were placed on a charge with Edenton. The next year the circuit was reported with Edenton again and so on until 1825 when it was placed with Murfreesboro. In 1826 Gates became a separate circuit. The reports at this time show that there were 484 white members and 74 black. During these early days the county was in the Norfolk District and

Gates was given a preacher every year except 1830-1, when the county is united with Bertie. In 1828 there were 661 white members and 88 colored. In 1832 there were 703 whites and 200 colored but the next year the colored members fell off to 90. In 1835 there were 790 whites and 100 colored members; in 1839, 758 whites and 95 colored. During these early days Isaac Soule, James Morrison, Irvin Atkinson, Vernon Eskridge, T. Jones, George W. Nolley, A. Norman, James P. Oliver and Isaac M. Arnold all served the people as preachers. However, much of the preaching before the 'forties was done by the local preachers and often the conference makes mention of these local ministers. In fact there are several instances where the conference appointments make special mention of local preachers who are to assist the regular preachers in the work in Gates.⁵⁷

As has already been said these early churches, like the Baptist churches of the same period, had negro as well as white members. There was a gallery built in the rear of the church where the negroes were placed. They would come up and commune after the white people had partaken. The presence of the negro in the churches in the county may be traced to Asbury with a reasonable degree of certainty; while in the county, he preached to them and seemed to delight in having them progress in the faith.* When the white people had their great camp meetings that lasted for two or three weeks, and there were at least two camp grounds in the county, one near Gatesville and one near Sunbury, the negroes would come, too, and have their meetings. An old negro preacher and slave, Jerry Harrell, was often a leader of the negroes of the Methodist faith when they came to the camp ground meeting.⁵⁸ In 1841 Philadelphia Church, Sunbury, had forty-one members of the negro race on its roll. After the war many of these negroes left the white churches and formed a negro church, but some of them stayed with their white friends even to their death.⁵⁹ Joe Hunter, an old colored preacher, did not leave the church at Sunbury after the war but continued to attend and hold his place in the gallery. Every time the whites would

* See account at Constant's Chapel in Vol. III, page 15, of Asbury's Journals.

commune, he would be there and wait until they all were through and then come down to be served.

Another thing that is very noticeable in going through the old church records is the frequency with which members were dismissed for misconduct. Every time a page is turned you will see some name scratched through and the word "dismissed" written beside it.

If we may be guided by the custom in vogue after the war, each of the eight Methodist churches in the county had preaching once each month. This meant that the preacher had to preach twice every Sunday. Sometimes services would be held on a week day, for there were more than eight churches in the Gates Circuit. It must be remembered that Gates was in the Virginia Conference and the church at Summerton and probably other churches in Virginia were connected with the Gates Circuit.⁶⁰

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

One would expect to find the Christian Church strong in the county, for it was in this section that James O'Kelly began his work. O'Kelly was presiding elder of the district in which Gates County is located when he made his break with Methodism. At Cypress Chapel, Virginia, not far from the Gates boundary line, the Christian church had its beginning.⁶¹ However, there was only one Christian church in the county prior to the Civil War. This church was the one at Sunbury. The date of its organization is not known but it was sometime about 1830. The story is told that the church was an offspring of Philadelphia, the Methodist church in the community. The separation was due not so much to a matter of doctrine as to a spirit of personal revenge. It is said that two men, brothers, had a dispute over a ladder. They were both members of the Philadelphia church and the little quarrel found its way into church affairs. The result was the organization of a new church, Damascus. Several families in the community divided, some going to the new and some staying with the old church. Nothing can be learned of the early history of this church. George Costen was the man of the early days who really contributed most to its growth.⁶²

From this survey of the churches we find that there were thirteen churches in the county before 1860. There were four Baptist churches with a total seating capacity of eighteen hundred, and property valued at \$2,200. There were eight Methodist churches with a seating capacity of thirty-three hundred and fifty, and property valued at \$4,100. There was one Christian Church with accommodation for four hundred and property valued at \$400. All of the old chapels of the Established Church of the colonial period had sunk into oblivion.⁶³

POLITICS

The geographical conditions in Gates County did much towards shaping political issues. The county was isolated and interest in state and national politics never ran as high as it did in some of the neighboring counties. When issues did arise, they were dominated mostly by exotic influences.

As a whole the county was about evenly divided in local issues. The people in the eastern part of the county, especially in the southeast, had more difficulty in marketing their products than those in the western part. The eastern section, especially in Mintonville Township, was more isolated than the other sections. Markets were far away and the roads were across sand ridges and swamps. Here a more democratic spirit developed. Mintonville was always the stronghold of the Democrats; in every election for state and national officers from 1840 to 1860 Mintonville polled a strong, and in several instances, an unanimous vote for the Democratic ticket. In the other townships conditions were somewhat different. They seem to be about evenly divided and this tendency is noticed more and more as the crisis of 1860 approaches.⁶⁴ If the vote was a one-sided one, it was sure to be against the man who was being supported in Mintonville. A few election returns taken at random from the scanty files that have been preserved at the county court house at Gatesville illustrate this well. The first returns from all the townships that can be obtained are those for governor in 1842. John M. Morehead was the candidate on the Whig ticket, and Lewis D. Henry on the Democratic. The returns by townships are as follows:⁶⁵

	<i>Morehead</i>	<i>Henry</i>
Gatesville	112	103
Hall	27	88
Haslett's	50	25
Brick House	14	32
Folley	63	53
Hunter's Mill	22	8
Mintonsville	25	114
Total.....	313	423

Again the election returns for governor in 1850 are suggestive; Reid ran on the Democratic ticket and Manly was the Whig candidate.⁶⁶

	<i>Reid</i>	<i>Manly</i>
Gatesville	82	112
Hall	55	69
Brick House	31	37
Haslett's	21	55
Folley	63	95
Hunter's Mill	No returns	No returns
Mintonsville	111	33
Total.....	363	401

The peculiar vote of Mintonsville holds out not only for governor but likewise for the election of state senator. In 1850, Mr. Henry Willey, a man prominent in the politics of the county, was the candidate on the Whig ticket, and Whitmel Stallings, also a man of importance in the county, was the Democratic nominee. Stallings was from Mintonsville Township in the eastern part of the county and served in the state senate and the assembly for fifteen years. Willey was from Willeyton, in Haslett's Township, in the western section of the county. The returns were as follows:⁶⁷

	<i>Willey*</i>	<i>Stallings</i>
Gatesville	49	32
Haslett's	35	14
Hall	30	24

* This was Mr. Henry Willey. His brother, John Willey, was a member of the lower house in 1830, 1832, 1833, 1834, 1842. John Willey and Whitmel Stallings were opposing candidates for the lower house for several years. Stallings finally won consistently over Willey. In 1842 when Stallings gets in the Senate, Mr. Willey is again elected to the House. John Willey and Stallings were both Democrats.

Brick House	15	16
Folley	48	25
Mintonville	17	56
<hr/>		
Total.....	194	167

Both of the foregoing candidates were from Gates County, but in the election for State Senator in 1856 neither of the candidates was from Gates. Dillard, the Democratic candidate, was from Chowan. Savage, the unsuccessful Whig candidate, was also from Chowan.⁶⁸ However, the same discord is disclosed in the county returns.⁶⁹

	<i>Savage</i>	<i>Dillard</i>
Gatesville	29	58
Hall	21	25
Haslett's	32	14
Brick House	12	24
Folley	28	58
Mintonville	77	16
<hr/>		
Total.....	199	195

The election for the member of the House of Commons was held at the same time that election to the Senate was held and the returns correspond very closely. In 1850 Gatling was the Democratic candidate for the Lower House. Gatling was from Haslett's Township and a member of the Gatling family that has been prominent in county politics from the beginning of the county to the present day. Eure, the Whig candidate, was from Hall Township and one of the most wealthy men in the county. The returns were as follows:⁷⁰

	<i>Gatling</i>	<i>Eure</i>
Gatesville	70	130
Hall	22	105
Haslett's	25	49
Brick House	30	36
Folley	70	104
Mintonville	111	37
<hr/>		
Total.....	328	461

The contest for the lower house in 1856 is very close to that of 1850, except in one instance: Gatesville Township was becoming more Democratic and this time cast most of its votes

for the Democratic candidate, Parker. Bond led the Whig ranks. The returns:⁷¹

	<i>Parker</i>	<i>Bond</i>
Gatesville	128	76
Hall	60	65
Haslett's	19	56
Brick House	56	25
Folley	70	104
Mintonville	142	24
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total.....	475	350

The change in the returns from Gatesville Township only denotes the general tendency of the county. The Whig Party had begun its decline.

Not only do the election returns for state officers show that one part of the county was lined up against the other part, but the returns for local officers also bear out this fact. Take for example the returns of the election for sheriff in 1856. Hill ran on the Democratic ticket and Lee was the Whig nominee.⁷²

	<i>Hill</i>	<i>Lee</i>
Gatesville	142	42
Hall	55	55
Haslett's	22	52
Brick House	33	48
Folley	80	93
Mintonville	147	16
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total.....	479	306

Again take a look at the returns in the Congressional elections. In 1847 Biggs of Martin County was the Democratic candidate for Congress in the district, and his Whig opponent was Outlaw of Bertie. These returns bear out the fact of Whig supremacy during the forties.

	<i>Biggs</i>	<i>Outlaw</i>
Gatesville	84	74
Hall	10	40
Brick House	24	20
Haslett's	10	40
Folley	76	85
Mintonville	17	62
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total.....	221	321

By 1851 the situation shows little change so far as national issues were concerned. The same men were again candidates and the returns from the townships in Gates showed little change. By the time the next congressional election came off there was a change. The Whigs began to lose out. The downfall came suddenly in 1855, when they failed to put out a ticket. With the overthrow of the Whigs the Americans, an independent party of the district, put out a candidate, R. T. Paine, of Chowan. Although Paine won the election, he was unable to carry Gates. Many of the old Whigs, rather than join the Americans, went with the Democrats.⁷³

	<i>Paine</i>	<i>Shaw</i>
Gatesville	93	118
Hall	40	52
Brick House	27	36
Haslett's	49	0
Folley	89	77
Mintonville	33	133
Total.....	331	416

It is evident from these returns that the Whigs and the Democrats were about evenly divided in the county until 1855, when the Whig party failed. After this time most of the voters went with the Democrats. In pointing out the close fight between Mintonville Township, which was the stronghold of the Democrats, and the other townships that were a little inclined to Whiggery, it will be well to mention how close the fight was in the early days. To carry the election, either side had to work hard. Each party would hold a convention, generally on the 4th of July, and the principal pastime was to abuse the other party.⁷⁴ The people did not stop their fight merely with the election for state and local officers, but carried it into the race for the president of the United States. In 1840 Harrison (Whig), received a majority of fifty votes over Van Buren (Democrat). In 1844 Clay (Whig) received a majority of twenty-seven over Polk (Democrat). In 1848 the Whig candidate, Taylor, received 379 votes, and Cass, Democrat, received 289. Scott (Whig) and Pierce (Democrat) tied for the county in 1852. Election returns for the

other years show that the race was always a warm one. The returns for the election of governor are very similar.⁷⁵

To sum up, these election returns indicate that politics in Gates was an uncertain thing. Nearly always a Whig went to the State Senate, but this is explained by the fact that Gates elected her senator with Chowan, Currituck, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Camden, and Hertford counties. All of these counties were inclined to Whiggery, and they outvoted the people of Gates even when Gates wanted a Democratic senator. In the House of Commons the county had first a Whig, then a Democrat. In the National elections most of the results favored the Democratic candidate, but it was not a landslide by any means; the same is true of the Congressional elections. As the Whig party declined, the tendency was for the two parties to unite, rather than for the Whigs to join in with the new American party. As 1860 approached there was greater unity on political questions. In 1856 the two townships that had the heaviest vote, and townships that always voted against each other, cast their lot together; in national and local elections both went Democratic. However the county was not to remain solid, for in the election of 1860 we find again a trace of the old sectionalism. By a vote of 161 to 131 the county voted for a Whig governor. And in this election, as in the former elections, Gatesville and Mintonville Townships voted against each other; Gatesville cast 87 votes for Ellis and 126 for Pool; Mintonville cast 132 votes for Ellis and 39 for Pool. The presidential vote was 353 for Bell, the Whig candidate, and 338 for Breckinridge, the Democrat.⁷⁶ This division was not due to any immediate national issue, but to a revival of old party lines, for the division is equally noticeable in the local elections. In Mintonville Township Ballard, Democrat, received 81 votes, while Eure received 127. In the election for sheriff Hunter received 61 votes in Mintonville, and Parker, 148. The reverse is true in Gatesville, where Hunter had 138, and Parker, 63. It is evident that this dissension in the county was deep-rooted. No doubt the fight in local, state, and national politics was carried on with much feeling. However, after the war, the county became united and it has been practically Democratic down to the present

day. Look how one-sided the vote for governor was in 1866! Worth received 96 votes and Dockery 4 (these 4 came from Mintonville). H. Willey had only 4 votes cast against him for the state senate, and Lee went to the lower house with the same record.⁷⁷

Although no returns can be obtained further back than 1842, the county was in all probability anti-Federalist in the early days, for Joseph Riddick, who was in the assembly for 35 years, voted with the anti-Federalists.* He never wanted to spend any money. The county was opposed to internal improvements and to the Literary Fund.^{78a}

Before attempting to pass any judgment as to the cause of political dissension in the county, it is well to show how these two sections stood on the matter of free suffrage. In August, 1857, the question of free suffrage in senatorial elections was submitted to the people, and the results in Gates fail to show an antagonism as strong as it was in the election of officers. Every township voted for the measure except Haslett's. There is no doubt that this result in Hasletts was brought about largely by the activity of Mr. Henry Willey, the Whig leader in the county, who lived in this section. Gatesville and Mintonville stand together for the free suffrage. Notice the difference in the vote from the townships on these questions and the vote when it is for the election of officers. The vote follows:^{78b}

	<i>Free Suffrage</i>	<i>Against</i>
Gatesville	123	20
Hall	49	29
Brick House	20	18
Haslett's	5	54
Folley	73	51
Mintionsville	108	6
Total.....	378	178

* Joseph Riddick was the leading man in the county from the close of the Revolutionary War to his death in 1839 or 1840. He was in the Assembly from 1781 to 1811 and again in 1815 and 1817. For nine years he was the speaker of the House, was a member of the convention at Hillsboro that debated the Constitution of the United States. During its sessions he made himself distinguished on account of his common sense. He bitterly opposed the ratification by the state of the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions and their defeat is largely due to him. He was also a member of the convention of 1835 for a new constitution for the state. In 1798 Governor Johnston wrote to James Iredell, "There are some men of very good understanding in both houses. Riddick, from Gates, has more influence in the Senate; he seems generally disposed to do what is right, but will go about it in his own way."^{78c} He made his trips to Raleigh in a stick-gig and never missed a session. At his old home is a grape-vine that he brought from Raleigh when he was a member of the Assembly.⁸³

It is seen that the county as a whole was strongly in favor of free suffrage; the democratic spirit prevailed. This vote on suffrage can no doubt be accounted for by the general conditions in the county. There were few schools and these were inadequate; the people were not large property-holders, yet all wanted to vote for the man who was to represent the county in the state Senate. There was no party change, however, in the next senatorial election; the Democrats were in power before the suffrage clause was voted upon. Mr. Willey was the man in the county to lead the movement against suffrage. He came from the community where there were the best schools. As will be noticed, the old Democratic stronghold, Mintonville, was strong for free suffrage.

In February, 1861, the question of calling a convention to consider secession was submitted to the people. The county was strong for the convention (vote: 377 to 141.⁷⁹) Only two townships voted against it, Hunter's Mill and Holly Grove.* In this vote on the convention we find Mintonville strong for the movement. The vote was 79 to 9.⁸¹

It is hard to give any definite reason for this division in the county on political issues. However, there are three explanations that are fairly plausible: first, when Gates County was created, that part taken from Perquimans went to make up Mintonville Township. That taken from Hertford and Chowan went to make up Gatesville Township. Later Chowan and Hertford were Whig counties, while in Perquimans the tendency was more towards the Democrats. The townships in the north were made up partly of one county and partly of another. Gatesville, made up from counties that became Whig, was Whig; Mintonville, made up from a county that became Democratic, was Democratic; and the other townships that had a mingling of each were never very solid. In colonial days there was rivalry between Perquimans and Chowan counties.

A more plausible reason, however, for this sectionalism in the county is to attribute it to the race of a few of the leading

* It is certain that the leading Whig in the county, Mr. Willey, was opposed to secession. Mr. Willey's opposition to the war cost him his seat in the State Senate for the next six years.⁸⁰ After the war he went with the Democrats and was sent to the Constitutional Conventions of 1865 and 1868, and to the State Senate several times.

men for office. We always find that the Whig leaders came from points surrounding Gatesville, while the Democratic leaders came from Mintonville Township. In the early days of the county the feeling was probably not as strong as it was after the development of parties in 1836. Joseph Riddick, from Mintonville Township, an anti-Federalist, represented the county in the House and Senate for 32 years. If the spirit had been as strong along party lines as it was in 1850, it is not probable that one man would have held office for this length of time. Other men held office, not for one or two years, but for a number of years. However, after 1840 no such conditions prevailed, there was a constant change in the personnel and in the party principles of the men elected to the various offices. John Willey, and later, his brother, Henry, came from Haslett's Township and made politics interesting. On the other hand, Whitmel Stallings, of Mintonville Township, was always ready to put up a good fight. Stallings was a Democrat and the leading man in his section of the county. Willey was a Whig and had an equal distinction in his section. It is very probable that it was these men who stirred up political questions and put them before the people. The people evidently did not see many newspapers, and politics, so far as the principles were concerned, appealed to them very little. Their only interest was a personal one, centering about Stallings and Willey. These men formed their ideas and appealed to the people for support. It is most likely that this sectionalism in the county was due to the political feeling that these men had formed in their respective localities. The spirit, once created in the community where people had nothing to do but talk politics during the winter months, did not easily die out. It took the Civil War and its hardships on all the people alike to make them see that they had a common interest and the best way to get things done was for all to stand together.

The question of internal improvements also played an important part in the division of the county. The people who lived in Mintonville Township had the democratic spirit of the pioneer. Internal improvements would not help them and they were opposed to paying taxes to help the other part of the county develop. The men who came from this section were

always opposed to internal improvements, and it was Stallings that made such a fight with Willey, of Haslett's Township, over this question. There were no waterways that could be opened to their advantage, and according to the true democratic spirit they were bitter opponents of spending money to develop trade routes.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The people of Gates County were an optimistic people and when it came to financial affairs they were care-free and loose. Content with their three meals a day, they never worried over the perplexing problems that were threatening the economic development of the country. They had their slaves; every man that was of any consequence held a few, none were large slave owners. The slaves did most of the work, and then they were not worked very hard. As has already been stated no man in the county was a magnet who controlled its finances. At only one time in the county did any one man list as many as one hundred slaves. In 1860 Mills Roberts, who lived in the Mintonsville section, listed this number.

The people raised only those things that were used at home. It was not profitable to raise cotton, for it would have to be hauled to Norfolk in a cart that would carry only one bale each trip, and only so much cotton as could be consumed at home was raised. The people sometimes raised a little corn to sell, however it took most of the corn produced to feed the hogs that were necessary to afford meat for the slaves. A large crop of corn, peas, potatoes and hogs usually constituted the crop of the Gates farmers.⁹⁴

Some of the people who lived on the edge of swamps secured a little cash by sending their slaves in the swamp to make shingles. Most of the shingles were hard to market, and this trade was followed only to a small extent. Those around Holley Grove and Coropeake sent their products down the Washington Ditch to the Dismal Swamp Canal and thence to Norfolk, while those around Gatesville marketed their crops, what little was left to market, after the slaves had been provided for, by sending them down Bennett's Creek to the Chowan River.

The land around Gates was fairly productive and the problem of providing for some easy way to market the crops once raised early arose. Before the Revolution the advantage of accessible markets, that could be obtained if an inward water system was opened, presented itself to the people.

Washington when in this section investigating the probability of internal improvements, says that a swamp runs near Farley's plantation, this plantation being 16 miles from Suffolk, and he indicates that a system of water-ways opening this country would be very profitable.⁸⁴ The people did not forget these things and they labored for a long time to get such a system of canals; after their day the fight was taken up by their children. In 1790 the Dismal Swamp Canal was chartered, but such a move was not of benefit to the inhabitants of Gates. It was impossible for them to get their products in this waterway that would carry them down to Norfolk to market.

The next step was to get some kind of canal to the county that would make the Dismal Swamp Canal of benefit to the people of Gates. The leaders in the county saw the advantage that such an outlet would afford and they began to work for it. The first attempt to get a canal in the county came in 1829, when an act was passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina, entitled "an act to incorporate the Lake Drummond and Orapeake Canal Company." This act provided that the canal since it would be a great benefit to the entire section, should be constructed and those furnishing the capital, since they would run some risk, be allowed to charge one-half the toll charged by the Dismal Swamp Canal Company. The capital was to be \$50,000 and the books for subscribers to stock were to be opened in Norfolk, Deep Creek and in Gates County on the first of April, 1830. In case one-third of the capital was subscribed by the second Monday in the following July the work of securing subscribers may continue until one-half the stock was subscribed and then the construction could begin. Tillery W. Carr, John C. Gordon, and John D. Baker were designated as the ones to receive subscriptions in Gates County. There was to be a president and three directors elected every three years who were to manage the

canal. The canal was to run from Lake Drummond to the south side of the Orapeake Swamp and was to be sixteen feet wide and five feet deep. The work must begin within two years and be completed in ten years. The canal company was chartered for forty years.⁸⁵

As to what steps were taken to get stock subscribed and as to the willingness of the people to back the project, it is hard to determine. It is evident that there were a few of the larger planters who had plantations situated near the proposed canal who were anxious to see the project materialize; but it is equally true that there were some in the county who fought the plan. The act chartering the canal was passed while W. W. Cooper represented the county in the senate and W. W. Stedman and Risup Rawles were the members representing the county in the lower house.⁸⁶ At least two of these men, Cooper and Rawles, were from near Gatesville, and from all account they took no special interest in the project one way or another. The people in one section of the county wanted the canal, and it did not matter materially to the people in the other sections. They had a roundabout way out of the county by the Chowan River and such a canal would not effect their interest.

However the next year there was a change in the lower house and a man come in who was always an ardent Democrat and therefore always opposed to anything that looked like internal improvements. Whitmel Stallings, of Mintonville Township, made his *début* in the political history of the county. Associated with him was John Willey, another Democrat and the brother of Henry Willey who later became the leader of the Whigs of Gates County. The question of the canal took on a political aspect and was made a party issue for several elections in the county. Stallings and the Democrats in Mintonville Township fought the canal because they were Democrats and as such were opposed to internal improvements; and again if the canal was constructed it would still leave their section without any available markets. If the lands in Holley Grove Township were opened, it would make the land in Mintonville have a comparatively smaller value.⁸⁷

The first check to the canal was made when the session

of 1830-31 met. During this session an act was passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina, entitled, "an act to amend an act, passed at the last session of the General Assembly of this state, entitled an act to incorporate the Lake Drummond and Orapeake Canal Company." This act provided that the said company should be compelled to extend their canal from the Orapeake Swamp to the Bennett's Creek or the act would be null and void.⁸⁸ This was probably a frame-up of the member from Mintonville and the members from around Gatesville. The company would in all probability not care to cut a canal over this high hand, and if they did, the people in Gatesville would also be benefited. The charter was extended to seventy instead of forty years.

The next session of the General Assembly passed another act that virtually nullified all that the act passed in 1830 had accomplished. The former charter was to be amended; the canal must go to Bennett's Creek; and was to be increased \$50,000, making a total of \$100,000; the right to construct a canal from Orapeake Swamp to Bennett's Creek, in order to be retained, must be begun in two and finished in ten years after the completion of the Orapeake Canal.⁸⁹

It is hard to say exactly what all of these laws meant, only one thing is certain and that is that Whitmel Stallings was at this time fighting the canal with all of his power. However, the people were determined to have a canal and they were equally strong in their opposition to Stallings. It is noticeable that at this time Holley Grove Township is inclined to go Whig. Even as late as 1850, Mr. Willey, the Whig candidate for the State Senate, polled 48 votes to Stallings' 25.⁹⁰ From all probability little was done to construct the canal. The reasons cannot be obtained. The matter must have been dropped for the time being, but we find another act passed by the General Assembly in its session of 1844-5.

"An act to revive and continue in force an act passed at General Assembly of 1831-32, etc." This provided that the work on the canal must be finished in ten years or the charter forfeited. In all probability new men had taken hold of the affair for we find that this act names Jesse Wiggins, Samuel R. Harrell, J. R. Lassater, Andrew Voight, Isaac S. Har-

rell, Dr. John Gatling and Burrell Brother to open the books in Gates County. As soon as \$25,000 of the capital is subscribed the stockholders are to meet and elect officers and proceed with plans.⁹¹ The plans of these men like the plans of those planters of 1829-30 seems to have fallen by the wayside. The capital was not raised and everything must have been dropped for we hear nothing more of the canal.

However in the early fifties a few men of the neighborhood got together and decided to cut a large ditch that would put them in touch with Norfolk. A ditch about twelve feet wide was cut from a point they called Hamburg, within one-half mile of Holley Grove, to the Washington Ditch and this ditch in turn ran into Lake Drummond and from there boats could go down the Dismal Swamp Canal to Norfolk. Col. Robert R. Hill, Samuel Harrell and Timothy Lassiter were the most active in getting this work done. This was the outcome of the twenty-odd years of strife in the county for a canal.⁹²

The people did not get the kind of a canal they wanted and the one that they did get came too late to save the economic condition of the county. There were several other canals proposed to come to the county and two were actually chartered, one was the Gates County Canal Company, referred to in Laws of 1830-1, Chapter 109, page 95; where this canal proposed to go is not known. Another was a canal referred to in Laws of 1829-30 and chartered about 1827. This canal was to go from the woods in Camden County to the White Oak Spring Marsh in Gates County. From all the facts that can be obtained concerning this canal some work must have been done on it. Now if all of the canals proposed and talked about had been constructed Gates County would have had a financial history, but politics was too rampant and the good of the county was sacrificed to petty party strife.

While the people on one side of the county were trying to get a canal, the people on the other side were sending their goods down the Chowan river. We find that laws are passed prohibiting the felling of timber in Bennett's Creek from Norfleet's Mill, and imposing a fine of \$10 for every offense. A similar law was passed concerning Catherine Creek.

These small creeks were not sufficient to stimulate the people of the county to any great activities, and they were never as prosperous as they would have been if they had secured a canal system that would have made nearby markets easy to reach.

CONCLUSION

As was said in the beginning, this account of Gates County has not been written because of any great achievements that its citizens have accomplished. There have been no great men or great movements in Gates that have stirred State and Nation; it has been a mediocre county and its people have been a mediocre people. What these people in Gates did and thought and how they lived, is characteristic of most of the people of North Carolina before the Civil War. There were only a few James Iredells and Elisha Battles; most of the people fell in the same class with the people of Gates County, and the value of this paper, aside from its local interest, is that it gives an account of that average class.

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